REPORT RESUMES

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BALTIMORE REACHES OUT--LIBRARY SERVICE TO THE DISADVANTAGED.
DEICHES FUND STUDIES OF PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE, NUMBER 3.
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THIS DOCUMENT IS A STUDY OF THE READING POTENTIAL OF BALTIMORE'S CULTURALLY AND EDUCATIONALLY DEPRIVED AND THE ENOCH PRATT FREE LIBRARY'S ROLE IN SERVING THE DISADVANTAGED. AFTER DESCRIBING THE PRESENT CONDITIONS OF THE INNER CITY AND ITS INHABITANTS AND AFTER A BRIEF HISTORY OF PRATT'S SERVICE IN CITY AREAS, THE AUTHOR DISCUSSES CHARACTERISTICS OF READERS AND NONREADERS AND PROPOSES A PROGRAM OF LIBRARY SERVICE FOR THE DISADVANTAGED. ESTIMATING THE COST AT $500,000 FOR TWO YEARS AND ADVOCATING INTENSIVE EFFORT IN TWO DEMONSTRATION NEIGHBORHOODS, THE AUTHOR SUGGESTS THAT THE LIBRARY--(1) COMPILE A PRELIMINARY BIBLIOGRAPHY FOR AN "OPPORTUNITY LIBRARY" OF READING MATERIALS FOR THE DISADVANTAGED, (2) CREATE NEW PUBLICITY MATERIALS FOR DISTRIBUTION DIRECTLY TO SLUM AREAS, (3) CONTINUE AN INFORMATION CAMPAIGN FOR THE LIBRARY AIMED AT PERSONS OF LIMITED MEANS, (4) BEGIN SPECIAL PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, (5) EXPERIMENT WITH NEIGHBORHOOD EXTENSION, AND (6) HIRE A FIELD WORKER TO DEVOTE FULL TIME TO CONTACTS IN THE TWO NEIGHBORHOODS. THIS DOCUMENT IS AVAILABLE FOR $2.00 ($1.60 EACH FOR 10 OR MORE) FROM PUBLICATIONS ASSISTANT, ENOCH PRATT FREE LIBRARY, 400 CATHEDRAL STREET, BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21201. (CC)

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THE PUBLIC LIBRARY IN THE CHANGING CITY

Baltimore Reaches Out

Library Service to the Disadvantaged

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THE DEICHES FUND STUDIES OF PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE The problems faced by the Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore's public library, in an age of urban change, surveyed and analyzed by Lowell A. Martin

No. 3

Deiches Fund Studies of Public Library Service

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Baltimore Reaches Out

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by

LOWELL A. MARTIN

No. 3 in the Deiches Fund Studies of
Public Library Service

ENOCH PRATT FREE LIBRARY • BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

June, 1967

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FOREWORD

During the several years since the first and second Deiches Studies, under the general title, "The Public Library in the Changing City," the Pratt Library has acted upon many of the recommendations made by Dr. Martin in "Students and the Pratt Library: Challenge and Opportunity" and "Space in Pratt Central Building."

One of the chief accomplishments has been the establishment of the position of School Liaison Librarian. The work of this position has involved experimentation and pilot projects aimed at increasing the chances for student satisfaction in using the public library for school-related purposes. Visits back and forth of school and library personnel have been useful in making better preparation for anticipated pressures upon the public library growing out of school curricula and assignments. This liaison, of course, must be ongoing. The need for it will never end while the public and school libraries serve in different ways the same group of users. Possibly the most important follow-up on the student problem is still ahead. This is the proposal for a supplementary student reference center to be funded under Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. If this is approved, we will be able to demonstrate the degree to which a large student reference center, located near the center of a large city, can meet the needs of secondary school students from the public and private schools of an entire metropolitan area. Whether or not this program receives federal support, the need for such a center remains, and we will continue to work for its establishment. From the operation of such a center the whole nation may be able to learn significant things which will help in the rationalization of public library service to the public library's heaviest users.

Even though a visitor to the Pratt Central Library has never heard of the Deiches No. 2 study, "Space in Pratt Central Building," he will be affected by the Library's implementation of some of the recommendations. Nine subject departments have been reduced to six, with consequent shifting of large masses of material and reassignment of staff. After a shakedown period and reorientation of the public, the new organization is working well. Some of the space recommendations must wait upon the construction of a large addition to the Central building. When that addition is built, we will have for consideration many of the other recommendations, which will be carefully examined in determining the functions and space use within the addition.

Now we have before us Dr. Martin's excellent study and provocative recommendations on the Library's service to the underprivileged. These recommendations come to us while we are engaged in one of the most significant projects undertaken in the eighty-one years of the Library's history. This is the reclassification of the entire collection to the Library of Congress classification system and the production of a book catalog. With many of our staff involved in this big operation and others working at the development of a program for the building addition, more work is cut out for us than cautious people might want to tackle.

But caution has never been the watchword of the Enoch Pratt Free Library. So we have added to our list of urgent priorities the job of digging into Dr. Martin's findings and recommendations. As he has indicated, during the time he was making this study the Library was already intensifying its program for the disadvantaged under provisions of the Economic Opportunity Act. We will be guided by Dr. Martin's recommendations, and by the time the last Deiches study in the series is completed, I hope we will be able to report results that will demonstrate not only our library's ability to respond to one of the great social challenges of our time, but results that will be useful as well for other public libraries.

None of this could have been undertaken without the generous grant from the Deiches Fund, the support of the Pratt Library Board of Trustees, and, perhaps most crucially, Dr. Martin's remarkable ability to combine experience, research, and imagination in such a way that all librarians and all those who use libraries will be even more deeply indebted to him than for his enormous past contributions.

EDWIN CASTAGNA
Director

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The present report draws upon the same basic data collected for and utilized in previous Deiches Fund Studies of Public Library Service.

The research methods and materials were the joint product of three groups and individuals. Acknowledgment must first be made of the contribution of Professors James Coleman and Jan Hajda of the Department of Social Relations of The Johns Hopkins University in the basic planning and design of the population samples and of the questionnaires and interview schedules. The interviews themselves and the questionnaires used in Pratt Library were administered by Sidney Hollander Associates of Baltimore, and Mr. Hollander contributed to the making of both the interview and the library forms. The third party to the development of the schedules and questionnaires was the author of this report, who must also take sole responsibility for the interpretations made of the data and the recommendations brought forward.

LOWELL A. MARTIN
May, 1967

CONTENTS

PAGE

I. Introduction 9

II. The City as Opportunity 10
The People of the City 11
The Disadvantaged in the City 13

III. The Library in the City 16
Limited Attention to the Underprivileged 16
Library Service to City Groups 17
Branch Libraries in the City 18

IV. The Enoch Pratt Free Library 20
The Last Four Decades 20
The Pratt Branch Program 21
Current Community Action Program 23

V. Readers and Nonreaders 25
What Makes a Book Reader? 25
The Reading Public 26
Social Composition of the Reading Public 29
Social Participation and Reading 31
Home Exposure to Books 33
Reading of Young Adults 34
Stages in the Development of Readers 36

VI. A Pratt Library Program for the Disadvantaged 39
Why a Special Program for the Disadvantaged? 39
Encouraging People to Come to the Library 42
Program for Children and Young People 44
Working with Community Groups 47
Bringing the Library to the People 48
Reading Materials for the Disadvantaged 49
Summary of Pratt Program for the Disadvantaged 50

Appendix 53
Research Methods Used 53

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Tables PAGE

1. Comparison of Three Baltimore-Area Population Groups 13
2. Children's Use of Public Library Compared with Family Background 26
3. Regular Reading of Three Groups of Newspapers 27
4. Magazines Read Regularly 27
5. Reading Publics for Different Types of Material 29
6. Educational Level of Readers and Nonreaders 30
7. Family Income and Book Reading 30
8. Occupational Prestige Class and Book Reading 30
9. Adult Book Reading 31
10. Age Distribution of Readers and Nonreaders 31
11. Institutional Participation and Book Reading 32
12. Voluntary Associations and Book Reading 32
13. Book Reading and Status of Women 33
14. Community of Origin of Readers and Nonreaders 33
15. Reading and Rating of Baltimore as a Place to Live 34
16. Reading and Greatest Source of Worry 34
17. Adult Book Reading and Time of First Use of Public Library 35
18. Adult Book Reading and Books Owned 35
19. Present and Potential Pratt Library Adult Users by Educational Levels 40
20. Newspaper Readership and the Library Message 43

Figures

1. City and Metropolitan Population, 1930-1970 12
2. Out-of-School Adult Use of Pratt Library by Educational Level of Neighborhoods 41

I. INTRODUCTION

This is an inquiry into the reading potential of city residents of limited cultural and educational background, and more particularly of the role which the public library can and should play in serving these people. The study is based upon Baltimore and the Enoch Pratt Free Library. It may have implications for library service in depressed areas in other cities.

The problem dealt with is more than an institutional question of library use. From the professional viewpoint it is the question of whether reading, and the public agency maintained to provide reading and related communication, can genuinely help the many poor and undereducated people living in the inner circles of larger and older cities. From a wider viewpoint it is the question of whether American society is still able to draw new members into its mainstream or whether it will solidify into the privileged and the underprivileged, those with advantages and those who are disadvantaged.

Baltimore provides a suitable setting for the inquiry. It is the first heavily industrialized center that migrants from rural areas come on as they move either from the South or from the depressed Appalachia district to the west. It has the familiar core area or "inner city" filled with persons of limited backgrounds and means. And the inner gray area is spreading, carrying blight outward; what were formerly isolated islands within the city are becoming established continents.

Particularly for the present study, Baltimore has the Enoch Pratt Free Library. This is one of the strong city public libraries in the United States, with genuine depth in both resources and staff, an unusual measure of public prestige, and a long tradition of service orientation in its program. If any city library is equal to the task, it should be Pratt. The question is what the Pratt Library can do, alone or with other institutions, within its present pattern or in some new pattern, for the city which Baltimore has become.

Because the question is complex and has implications beyond the usual techniques of library practice, the report first sets forth briefly the cultural position in which the older American city finds itself today and then places the city library, particularly the Pratt Library, within this picture. Attention is next focused on reading and nonreading as manifested in the Baltimore area, with special reference to families with limited education. Only then is it possible to come to grips with the practical matter of just what the Pratt Library can and should do for the poor and disadvantaged.

Not much has been known systematically about reading in our society, and even less about a group usually dismissed as "nonreaders." Information for this report was obtained not only from library users but also from a cross section of the city population, the latter in hour-long interviews. The sample was selected by the Department of Social Relations of The Johns Hopkins University, and the interviews were conducted by Sidney Hollander Associates of Baltimore. The interview schedule was developed jointly by the Hopkins participants, Hollander Associates, and the Deiches Fund Studies staff. The research methods used are described in the Appendix. These sources provide an unusually clear picture of the present situation. A program is proposed for the Pratt Library on this basis.

This is the third of the Deiches Fund Studies of Public Library Service. The whole project was made possible by a grant from the Deiches Fund of Baltimore to the Pratt Library. The purpose of the Deiches Studies is not an internal analysis of the Library. Rather it is accepted that the Pratt Library has a very considerable degree of strength, and the several studies give attention to the emerging problems that confront large city libraries in an age of urban change. The first Deiches report analyzed the increasing student need for reading materials and proposed a program involving both the schools and the Pratt Library. Definite steps have already been taken to implement this program. The second report outlined adjustments indicated in the Central building of the Enoch Pratt Free Library, particularly in its subject organization, to meet increased demands in a period of rapidly expanding knowledge and of growing specialization. The second study has served to intensify staff planning for use of space, which has led to a detailed plan in two phases. The fourth document, to follow the present report, will be devoted to an analysis in some detail of present and future use and users of the Pratt Library, leading to implications for library policy in the period ahead, including branch service. There will follow a report on library needs and possibilities in the Baltimore metropolitan area and the role which Pratt can play in bringing about integrated library service in the region.

II. THE CITY AS OPPORTUNITY

For the second time in fifty years the American city is called upon to receive, educate, and raise up a wide segment of economically and culturally underprivileged people.

Early in the century the millions came primarily from Europe. "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses. . . ." And the city did raise up the multitude. The immigrants lived in the crowded, vital center of the metropolis. Their grandchildren live today in the suburbs and conduct the business, the technical operations, the professional services, and the research on which our society rests. The city proved to be not only a melting pot but also a converter that produced steel from raw iron and gold from rough ore. It accomplished this by offering to its millions the stimulation of the urban setting, the education of city institutions, and the job opportunities of an urban-based economy. The city drew the new arrivals into the flow of twentieth-century American life by means of the neighborhood, the settlement house, the church, the school, and the library.

Today the city's underprivileged come not from across the ocean but from among our own ranks. Some have moved from the backroad of the farm to the crossroad of the city. Some lost out in the gamble of the urban revolution in the first half of the century. And many were denied the chance to play the game because of the color of their skin.

The question now is whether the city and its institutions can again take the mass and somehow bring out individual capacities. If it can, the American dream of opportunity for all will prove itself anew. If it cannot or does not, America will increasingly divide into two societies, the affluent and the deprived, the elite and the disadvantaged. The dream will fade, as the new land becomes old and its people divide between those who share the benefits of their society and those who find themselves left out.

The city performed the miracle a half-century ago. Can it do so again for the disadvantaged who have grown up in its midst?

The city remains the vital center. Communication emanates from the city. Major decisions of government are made there. For all the suburban movement and the development of decentralized shopping centers, it is to the city's heart that most people turn for special services and goods. For all the decentralized nuclei of manufacture, business decisions and financing are still centralized. Whether for a cultural activity or sporting event, the city is the location of premiere performances. The suburbs take on form and focus from their relation to the city and without the urban focal point would be satellites without a center.

But some of the most thoughtful observers of the day see this vitality as a carry-over from the past, the inertia of a previous pattern, and note the many destructive forces now at work in the city. Lewis Mumford believes these forces are striking at the very life and purpose of the city and can envisage nothing other than steady decline, not only of the urban center but of the society which it nourishes, unless the city is fundamentally reoriented to foster the human personality.[1] The individual citizen, caught in a traffic jam in the city, disgusted with its dirt and shabbiness, fearful of its crime, reaches much the same conclusion through his nerve ends. Yet others see countervailing forces. Jane Jacobs underlines the possible benefits of the mixture and stimulation of people in the city, so long as we retain variety and concern on the part of individuals rather than segregating functions in overplanned developments.[2] Even beauty as well as utility in man-made structures in urban settings is discerned by two thoughtful analysts of the current scene.[3]

While large business and finance are still located in the city center—and Baltimore is now rebuilding its center—in the nearby neighborhoods occupied by the underprivileged the constructive forces of the past seem weakened. The home is often loose-knit or broken as compared with the intense family groups of the past. The street, which was an arena of vital forces and budding ambitions in which individuals gathered strength to venture into the world beyond, has become almost a fortress in which the dispossessed meet to exchange their grievances. The neighborhood park began as an oasis for the family but has become the focal point of gangs. The settlement house has almost disappeared. An occasional housing project provides a physical break, but its way of life is much like that of the streets around. The school remains, but as an agency technically devoted to teaching and seldom functioning beyond that in the life of the community; the pendulum has swung well away from the concept advanced by John Dewey of the school as an instrument for changing society. The church carries on, often with limited means and personnel in the slums, sometimes constituting a community center and rallying point. And then there is the public library, which we must shortly examine with more care.

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[1] Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961).

[2] Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961).

[3] Christopher Tunnard, and Boris Pushkarev, *Man-Made America: Chaos or Control* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963).

Efforts have of course been made to rehabilitate the gray areas of the inner city, in the welfare programs of the thirties and again in the reconstruction after World War II. Attention in the past was given primarily to the physical environment in the form of low-cost government-financed housing. This was the tangible and visible aspect of the problem. But the rate of rebuilding could not keep pace with spreading blight, and after long and valiant effort in such a center as Baltimore, the depressed areas constitute a larger part of the city than before rehabilitation started.

More recently the emphasis has shifted from the isolated housing project to area-wide rehabilitation—physical attack on a wider scale. This manifests itself in the wholesale clearing out of a several-block area and the building of a whole new complex. Often such wide-scale projects are immediately adjacent to the business center of the city and are in substance an extension of the center. They are devoted to new shopping areas, to cultural or civic centers, to better apartment buildings, and to medical and hospital facilities. They remove a nearby eyesore, they add a pleasing and even imposing vista, and they augment the central facilities of the city.

But what they do directly for the underprivileged person is less clear. He seldom can live in the bright new area. He is not a primary user of its cultural assets, for one of the first things we find about the disadvantaged person is that he is cut off culturally and seldom uses the institutions and services of the city. He simply moves out a little farther, so that the new rehabilitation may actually serve to spread the blighted zone. This does not meet the problem of the disadvantaged; it simply pushes it a little farther away.

A new focus has come into the picture in the last few years, particularly with federal government attention and the development of the antipoverty program. People instead of buildings are to be rehabilitated. Jobs and education are to be dealt with first. A notable statement of this fresh view was compiled in Baltimore and issued in 1962 by the Health and Welfare Council of the Baltimore Area under the title "A Letter to Ourselves." Actually this is an old emphasis, going back to the earlier welfare and settlement-house concern with people where they are, but the federal program has served to revitalize this concern. As yet the national antipoverty program is without clear form and direction, although it displays a healthy diversity. Promising work is going on at the local level, in Baltimore taking the form of a Community Action Commission which has opened neighborhood centers in one "target area" in the southeastern part of the city. The renewed national dedication is a source of hope. It is too soon to say whether it will have the scope and the staying power to deal with a most complex problem.

In favor of the new rehabilitation and antipoverty program is the fact that it starts with people. Now the question is whether the emphasis will be on welfare—that is, temporary alleviation of the present situation in the form of economic aid, counseling on present problems, better facilities for the sick and aged, and the like—or whether emphasis will be more on preparation for participation in the wider society by means of education, over the full range of formal schooling, preparation for jobs, training in practical living, and introduction to the broader culture. This latter approach would come closer to the heart of the problem, for the disadvantaged person is one who lacks the ticket of admission to the affluent society, the prerequisite of education. To the extent that education is emphasized, the potential role of the public library in the human-renewal program will be enhanced, for while it has only a limited contribution to make to physical rebuilding and to welfare, it may well have a substantial contribution to make to informal education through individual effort.

The city itself will give the final word on whether it is still the threshold to opportunity, and will have to do so within the next decade. Both the defenders and the critics of the city are right. It has vitality, and it has destructive forces. The central issue is whether it has the power of self-renewal. This will be determined by the ability of its leaders and of its institutions, including the public library, to adjust to the new city and to the people who now live there.

The People of the City

We know that the old residents have been moving from the city to the suburbs and after them the not-so-old residents. The suburban trend includes not only established families but also the young professional, the young businessman, and the young technician in the new industrial plants that ring the metropolis. This has been a wave reaching out year by year, starting at the center and rolling now into the middle area. In time much of the city, except for isolated pockets, will have experienced the rise and fall of the wave.

Behind the wave are left those who did not ride with it and those who came in after the wave passed. They are the disadvantaged of our society, the people whose education remains limited in an economy requiring more and more knowledge and skill and whose income remains substandard in a culture marked by abundance. They live between the commercial productivity of the center of the city on the one side and the social affluence of the suburbs on the other.

This fundamental change has affected the total population of the city. The figures for Baltimore are similar to those for older eastern centers. Baltimore City reached its peak of population in 1950 at 949,708. Today the estimated figure is 922,000.[4] The falloff was very gradual in the first years after World War II, due to a succession of factors which tended to counteract a greater decline: the heavy general birth rate immediately after the war, the influx of unskilled workers seeking jobs in city-based industries during the expansion of the fifties, and the continuing high birth rate of those living in the older sections of the city. The decline in population has accelerated somewhat since 1960, primarily because the influx of unskilled workers has fallen back as jobs are no longer readily available for them. There may be some small upturn in the latter half of the decade, as persons born in the immediate postwar period come to maturity and form families. The population of Baltimore in 1970 will be just a little under that for 1960, and about 3 per cent below the 1950 peak.

A few of the oldest cities—notably New York, Philadelphia, and Boston—have experienced a counter movement in the form of suburban residents moving back to apartments near the center of the city. In New York this has progressed to the point where various neighborhoods near the center are experiencing an upturn in population, and Manhattan as a whole is likely to have more residents in 1970 than it had in 1960. In Baltimore this has occurred thus far on only a small scale, but there are forces which may accelerate it. The Charles Center redevelopment for business in turn is likely to stimulate more nearby apartment building. The central cultural institutions—Peabody in music, Walters in art, the Civic Center in sports, Pratt not only in library service in the technical sense but also in the world of literature—have held on and in some cases flourished, and together serve as a magnet drawing people back to the center. The movement from the suburbs to the city is not likely to be reflected in a large way in the 1970 census, but it will be a decade later. But of course all this in itself will not remove the causes of slum areas although it may serve to relocate them in a wider ring.

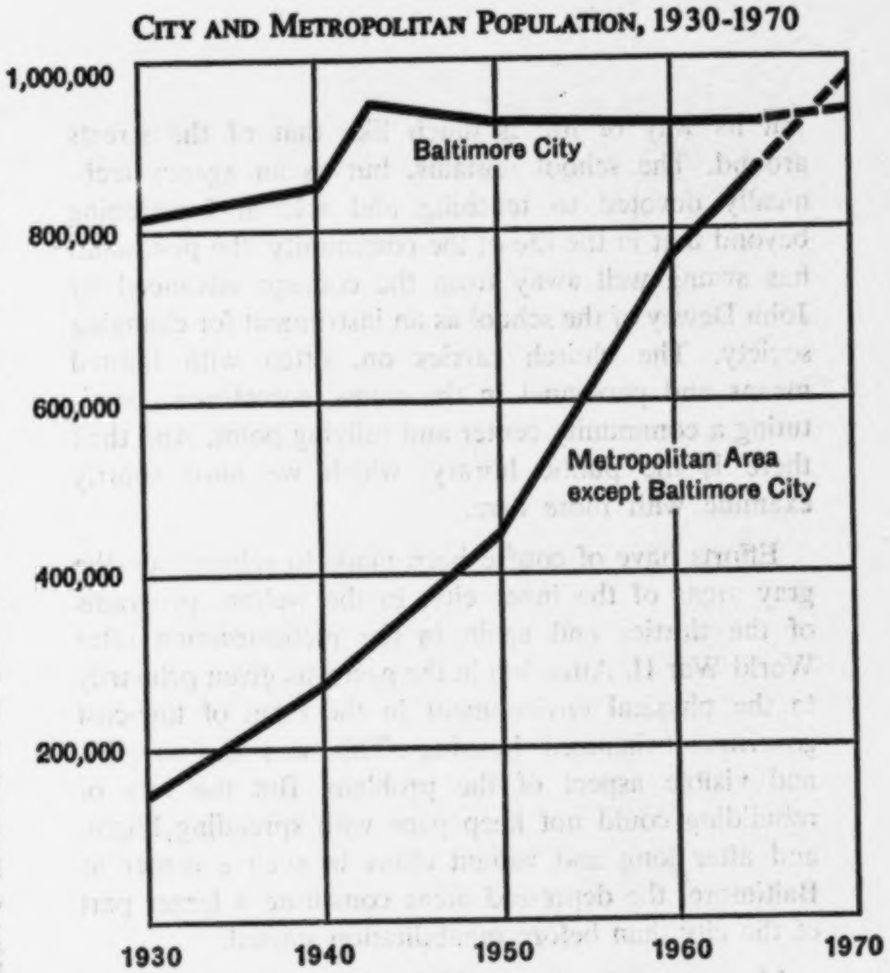

FIGURE 1

With the population changes of the last two decades, the racial composition of Baltimore's population has also changed. In 1940 Negroes made up 19 per cent of the total; today the percentage is 39.2. Once again several factors combined to bring about the change. This group was left behind by the suburban wave, as economic and housing opportunities were closed to them. They constituted many of the migrants who came from rural areas seeking industrial jobs. And their birth rate has been higher than that for the total population. Within the last year or two the rapid rate of growth of Negroes in the Baltimore population has tapered off due to a smaller number of migrants.

Census figures make it possible to compare statistically three broad population groups in the urban complex: the city population as a whole, the suburban population, and the nonwhite group within the city. Table 1 shows the clear progression of social indices for the three. The nonwhite population has less education, fewer professional and managerial jobs, less income—and more children. On the other side, the suburban group has distinctly higher educational and income figures. The difference between the nonwhite group on the one side and the suburban group on the other is a difference between adult populations with an average of elementary school education and of high school education and a difference of almost two to one in family income. The census data are now of course

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[4] Estimate from Bureau of Biostatistics of Baltimore City Health Department.

TABLE I

COMPARISON OF THREE BALTIMORE-AREA POPULATION GROUPS*

Characteristic	Nonwhite Population	Baltimore City Population	Baltimore County Population
Median school years completed, 1960	8.4	8.9	10.9
Median family income, 1960	$4,123	$5,659	$7,098
Per cent of males employed in professional and managerial positions	5.4	17.9	27.4
Per cent under 18 years of age	41.3	33.6	37.9

* U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population and Housing: 1960. Baltimore, Md., Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1962).

several years old, and the figures have changed in the interval, but the ratios from one group to another probably still hold.

We must remember that these are statistical averages. Particularly for the groups with lower indices, they tend to hide the individuals who have risen from the ranks of the depressed. Thus, 5.4 per cent of the Negroes in Baltimore were listed in the 1960 census as holding professional and managerial jobs. Twelve per cent of Negro families had incomes of $8,000 or more, and the figure is higher today. A discernible number of the disadvantaged have already found opportunity in the urban environment, and the society evidently retains at least a degree of fluidity.

The Disadvantaged in the City

Fifty years ago the city was a cross section of America, with rich and poor and all those between. It stood ahead of the country in such measures as education and income levels. Today it increasingly becomes the depressed segment of our society. What were formerly pockets or ghettos in circumscribed sections within the city have become long, dreary, uniform stretches; the rotten core is spreading to the whole organism.

The effect of this change is pervasive. The city, once the jewel in the countryside, becomes the scar on the landscape. Within this blight lives the disadvantaged person.

There is a direct financial effect of the movement of the advantaged farther out and the spread within the city of the area occupied by the disadvantaged. The city is left with those least able to provide tax revenues. Those better able to pay, plus newer industries which also produce tax revenues, are out in the suburbs. The city is caught in a financial squeeze. It has a limited tax base and at the same time deteriorating physical facilities to maintain, higher crime areas to police, more concentrated fire areas to protect, and more extensive traffic jams to unravel. The future of the city is bound up with its ability to tap new revenue sources.

The result of the financial squeeze shows in the quality of formal education. Formerly rich and poor alike paid for city schools, and urban educational systems led the way to higher standards. Now, when exceptionally good schools are needed in the city to help lift up the many culturally deprived youngsters living there, the city schools have fallen behind. The city of Baltimore spent $414 per pupil and the county of Baltimore $485 for school purposes in 1964/65. In the city the per-pupil expenditure for library books was $.80, whereas the figure was $2.71 in the county.[5] In other words, it is precisely the youngster who lacks books in his home who has fewer books around him in school.

The effect is psychological as well as physical and educational. One mark of the disadvantaged person today which came out again and again in the Deiches interviews in Baltimore is that he is culturally cut off and isolated. Although he lives in the middle of the urban complex, his contacts are likely to be limited to other disadvantaged persons. His fortress is the home, the church, the fraternal organization, the corner bar: it may not be much of a fortress to look at, but at least he can stand behind it as he looks out at the America in which he is an alien. He does not participate in the educational and cultural institutions of the city, even though he lives closer to them than most of those who do participate.

The geographic distribution of patrons of theaters, concerts, and art events shows that most come from the outer sections of the city and from the suburbs and actually go through the locale of the underprivileged to get to these affairs. The same pattern holds for the use of the Central Library of Pratt: the largest per-capita use is by those living three to four miles away, and people out in the suburbs actually use Pratt Central more than those in the inner city, despite the fact that they must cover a much greater distance to get to the building and are not residents of the governmental unit that supports it.

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[5] Both figures fall far below the minimum standards presented in American Library Association *Standards for School Libraries*, 1960.

The circle seems closed. Underprivileged people—lack of effective educational facilities to release them—lack of tax resources to provide effective facilities. It is for this reason that the "urban problem" looms ever larger in the concerns of the nation. On a smaller scale, it is for this reason that the possible contribution of the Pratt Library should be explored, for Pratt remains a strong educational institution within the urban setting.

Whether the circle can be broken by the public library or by any other agency depends in part on the disadvantaged themselves. City renewal will depend not only on providing opportunity for the disadvantaged but equally on their response. The history of America has shown that the underprivileged mass could in the past be transformed into the community of solid citizens—from the refugees from debtors' prison in the eighteenth century to the refugees from European stagnation in the early twentieth century. The hard question we face today is whether the considerable group which has not really entered contemporary culture and has not moved up economically has the same potential. Not everyone can be educated, nor will everyone become a reader. These are activities which require ability and effort on the part of the individual no matter how good the schools and the libraries. The immigrants of the past were on the way up and grasped any opportunity open to them; we have to ask whether many slum dwellers today are on the way down, or at least are not fired by ambition to be achieved through education, so that no conceivable provision of facilities is likely to have much effect. With the exception of the Puerto Ricans, the poor and uneducated of today have lived for at least a few generations in the American environment. Schools have been available to them. They could learn to read. Usually libraries, at least in the form of a state library if not of a local agency, have existed to provide free books. Some job opportunities have been open. One conclusion is that the problem is not so much the lack of opportunity but simply the lack of individual initiative and potential.

This may be an oversimplification of the situation. At any time in the past it would have been easy to dismiss the lower classes as composed of those who simply did not have the capacity to rise, and indeed this view was not uncommon beginning back in colonial days. Never have the disadvantaged become the advantaged simply by opening a school or creating a skilled job. The problem is as much what the society makes of these individuals as what they make of themselves. We are all the products of our environment as well as of our capacities, but it is easy for the person who has gained status to give all the credit to his own effort. Our later analysis of readers and nonreaders in Baltimore will show that the determining factors in reading extend all the way from the conditions in the home at birth to the extent of participation of the individual in life beyond his own family and street as an adult. Readers are not made simply by opening a public library. People are formed by a whole complex of family and neighborhood and social forces, and it is neither logical nor humane to provide a facility for them and then to conclude that they lack initiative and potential when they do not immediately reverse the influences of a lifetime.

An added factor, applying in Baltimore as elsewhere, is that of limitation of opportunity because of color. Our earlier observations about the availability of schools and libraries, if people would but use them, must be modified in the case of the Negro. The areas from which many migrants have come to Baltimore have not had equal or desegregated schools and libraries. Within Baltimore itself, employment and social barriers have existed.[6] And that more pervasive factor that the Deiches interviews showed to be closely related to nonreading—isolation from the wider social and cultural stimulus that is America today—is particularly characteristic of the many small Negro neighborhoods within the big city. Consideration should be given to fresh approaches to library service in slum districts if for no other reason than to give opportunity to whatever portion of the Negro population is prepared to respond. But library service is not a matter of race or color, but of opportunity for all.

The schools and the libraries as the most distinctly educational institutions in the urban environment face a decision which has confronted them for some time and which cannot be postponed much longer. It is perfectly obvious that there are readily educable youngsters, and of course the public school must serve them. By the same token there are natural readers, and of course the public library must serve them. The question is whether the school should also go out of its way to serve those not so readily educable and whether the library should seek to reach those who are now not using reading. The decision will be one significant factor in determining whether the city will continue to be the means for the disadvantaged to rise or whether it will become a barrier between the privileged and the underprivileged.

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[6] It must be made clear that there never has been segregation in services in the Pratt Library. The conditions of the original gift from Enoch Pratt specified that facilities were to be op[illegible] ". . . without distinction of race or color."

The school has had its decision made for it because it perforce serves all children, advantaged and disadvantaged. Whether it has served both equally well is a moot point. Our concern here is the policy and the practice of the public library in serving the underprivileged. Attention should therefore be shifted to the library within the city and to a review of its approach thus far to the culturally deprived portion of its community.

III. THE LIBRARY IN THE CITY

The public library is a city product. Its antecedents appeared when urban groups, whether of ambitious artisans in Philadelphia or of cultured gentlewomen in Atlanta, sought book resources beyond the reach of individual members. In its appearance as a tax-supported institution in Boston in 1850, it was early identified with the concept of educational uplift for the rank and file.[7] The same motive was behind Enoch Pratt's gift of a library to Baltimore in 1881 when he stated, "My library shall be for all, rich and poor without distinction of race or color. . . ."[8]

The early proponents and benefactors saw the public library as a means to help the disadvantaged in their struggle for position. Judging from their pronouncements, one can reasonably guess at their response if they saw public libraries today being used primarily by the well-educated and by formal students. They would probably comment that of course a library will be used by these groups but that their interest was more in the others, those not yet educated nor formally committed to study. The same motive was expressed at intervals over the years, down to the designation of the library as the "people's university."[9]

Limited Attention to the Underprivileged

But practice has differed from theory. The record would not support the conclusion that uplift and service to the disadvantaged have occupied a prominent place in the practice of public librarianship during its first century. It is true that the first librarian of Pratt, Lewis H. Steiner, commented in one of his early reports, "The mechanic, the laborer, the toiling women are frequently anxious for investigations of a character that startle the guardians of a Library."[10] It is also probable that a degree of acculturation occurred as persons of foreign background learned English and then explored American life in books. But in Baltimore, as elsewhere, as the latter years of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth go by, one looks through many library reports without finding mention of programs designed for the less educated portion of the population. Examples of individuals from the lower classes using the library are cited with satisfaction, but as exceptional persons who reach up to the prevailing library program rather than as recipients of services designed expressly for them.

These were the years when the purposes of the public library in the United States were hard to define. The institution developed more in response to majority reading demands than to any conscious sense of purpose or mission. The library's main aim seemed to be the provision of what the larger groups of readers requested, if they were unable to get the desired material conveniently elsewhere. When the readers who entered its doors wanted the polite literature of the turn of the century, this is what was provided. When a broadened reading group sought diversional fiction in the twenties, this constituted the mainstay of the agency. In the thirties when the unemployed sought help from the library, the agency made efforts to provide it, and the annual reports of libraries of the period comment on this with a sense of discovery. The information demand recurred in the fifties, this time not because of economic depression but because of economic expansion with the advent of new products, new jobs, and new markets. As the sources of diversion multiplied, in magazines and paperback books and on radio and television, the public library found itself free to devote more of its resources to subject collections and to move away from lighter entertainment. In time the expanding number of students in schools and colleges turned to the subject resources available, to the surprise and concern of some public librarians, who had not been quite sure for whom these resources were being assembled.

The public library started as a reform agency in a period when public institutions were thought of as instruments of social change. In time it became the supply source for the larger reading groups turning to it. This is not necessarily a criticism. The library has provided what people wanted. It has adjusted as demands upon it changed, showing a considerable flexibility in the process. Today its greatest use comes again from a ready-made reading public, the formal student who cannot get the resources he needs in his school or college library, and there is no doubt that the public library is making a contribution in this capacity. The point at the moment is that this is not a purpose which public library directors formulated nor a public which they selected, but rather a reading group which on the contrary has sought out the library.

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[7] Jesse H. Shera, *Foundations of the Public Library* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), pp. 218-19.

[8] Luther Evans, "The First Sixty Years. The Enoch Pratt Free Library: An Appreciation," *Library Journal*, February 15, 1946, p. 230.

[9] Alvin Johnson, *The Public Library—the People's University* (Washington, D.C.: American Association for Adult Education, 1938).

[10] Enoch Pratt Free Library, *Sixth Annual Report of Librarian*, 1892, p. 5.

The public library has moved along with the increasing level of education in the country. The distinctive characteristic of library users as a group has been their above-average education,[11] and this is confirmed for Baltimore by the Deiches findings, as reported in a later chapter. An internal logic has in a sense carried the institution away from the underprivileged person of low educational and cultural background. Responding to those who sought it out, and these being primarily persons of considerable background, the library has become more an institution for the culturally advantaged.

There is nothing surprising in this, for reading is an educated activity, and reading material is a record of culture. There is considerable vindication for the library policy. The tide of education is rising, and it is natural for an institution based on reading to ride with it. Funds at the disposal of libraries have been limited, and the means available had to be stretched to serve the group that did come to the agency. There was often neither the money nor time nor staff to reach out to additional groups.

The policy that has prevailed can also be justified on the grounds that the use of the public library can be expected to increase as educational levels continue to rise. For the present inquiry we are now asking whether the public library in general and the Pratt Library in particular can and should reverse this trend in part of its program and reach out to the relatively uneducated.

The relation between education and library use also helps to explain what might seem to be the paradox of the very large central library collection built up and located in the middle of the part of our society with the most limited background. Demands on the library by educated persons have led to larger and larger subject collections in the main libraries of cities. This has accelerated since World War II, precisely during the period when the problem of the central core area in cities came to the fore.

The irony of the situation is that the people the central library was built up to serve have moved away to the suburbs, which are not able to provide facilities at the same level. The library of genuine strength is in the center of the city; the subject readers live in the suburbs. The main city library finds around it the disadvantaged nonreader. If it were not for two distinct groups that are prepared to come from a distance, the main unit would have only a fraction of its present use, limited primarily to individuals who use the agency in connection with their work in the central city. One of these groups is the students, who have sufficient motivation to carry them across the distance to the library building; at least 60 per cent of the Central use of Pratt comes from this source. (See Deiches Fund Studies No. 1.) The other group is made up of the more purposeful readers among the suburbanites. Twenty per cent of the nonstudent users of Pratt Central live outside the city. In the case of a center such as Newark, where the process of deterioration of the core has progressed to the point where much of the city is affected, half the persons coming through its doors live outside the city. Increasingly the central library is an agency maintained by the city for the use of noncity residents.

The fact remains that central library units in cities, including Pratt Central in Baltimore, continue to be heavily used. The central location is adjacent to the commercial center of the area, which brings in a large transient clientele each day. The massive redevelopment of the Charles Center in Baltimore should go a long way to revitalize this area as a commercial focus, and Pratt Central is located at the edge of the development. More advanced students are prepared to make their trek to the center. There may even be starting a movement back to live near the center. There is little likelihood in this specialized age that the central libraries in our cities will be abandoned, but for our present purposes it should be noted that they are agencies for the educated reader with clear motivation and not for the disadvantaged person taking his first steps into the world of print. It would be a mistake to assume that inner-core neighborhoods are adequately served by very large central libraries.

Library Service to City Groups

The implication of the foregoing brief historical review is that the public library has tended more to serve those who come to it and less to serve groups selected by the library. However, this generalization cannot be left without qualification, because there have been selective group programs in public libraries over the years, and in at least one case a sustained group program that has achieved notable success.

The notable success in the public library has been children's service. This did not develop from observing which children came to the library and then determining what they wanted to read. On the contrary, a purpose was first established, that of introducing children to the best of literature for their age level. Staff members dedicated to this purpose and trained for this group were then hired, appropriate reading materials were acquired, and methods of stimulating and guiding reading were adopted. The children's collection from the beginning has been highly selective. It contained only the "better" books at a time when the adult collections were made up more of what patrons requested. Selection for children was done not by the standard of popularity but of quality. In time the children's librarians themselves have come to influence what constitute the most popular juvenile titles. Methods also have been fashioned to the purpose, with the story hour one of the distinctive educational devices contributed by the public library.

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[11] Bernard Berelson, *The Library's Public* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949).

It is interesting to note the response to this program, particularly because it was not based on reader demand alone. Conceivably, the high standard of children's service of the public library might have been ignored for reasons no more complex than that children prefer to play in the street or sit before the television set than to read what some remote adults called librarians consider to be "good" books. Many a noble program that ought to get response has shriveled up before public indifference. Yet public libraries today have a decidedly larger portion of the children than of adults as regular readers. The program, though developed years ago, still has full vitality. It works in the slum as well as in the suburb. And in the public mind it is thought of as one of the most natural and significant activities of the public library. The children's service of Pratt could be used as well as that of most other cities to exemplify this success story.

The "adult education" movement in public libraries constitutes a somewhat parallel development, but it has not achieved the same success as children's service. As a separate movement it appeared and spread during the twenties and the thirties. The purpose behind it was to reach and serve the more purposeful adult reader, who was either already interested in systematic pursuit of his reading interests or who could be motivated to sustained attention to subject reading. The readers' adviser appeared to serve this purpose, reading courses were prepared, book discussions, lectures, and film showings were organized to stimulate readers, and work with community groups was stepped up in an effort to search out the purposeful reader.

The history of adult education in libraries has been presented in a work based on case analyses of three libraries, of which Pratt was one.[12] Suffice it here to report that during and after World War II the work in most libraries was absorbed into the regular reference and subject service, and the term "adult education" is now infrequently used. In the instance of Pratt, the adult education services never took as distinct a form as in many other libraries, in part because the Librarian from 1926 to 1945 saw adult education more as an animating purpose throughout library service and in part because most effort in Baltimore in those years was devoted to building up the Central subject collection and services. Yet perhaps more than in many other libraries, Pratt continues to use elements of the adult education movement, in reading lists, in planned lecture series and film showings, and in the advisory dimension of the work of the subject librarians.

Other more specific group services developed by public libraries have tended to come and go, as demand and enthusiasm rose and then waned. The broader children's activity and the adult education effort have been more long-lived. Probably the basic program to reach segments of the population, including people in underprivileged neighborhoods, has taken the form of branch community libraries.

Branch Libraries in the City

Before and after the turn of the century, city libraries began to add branches to bring facilities into local neighborhoods. In the case of Pratt the very foundation grant specified local outlets in the several sections of Baltimore.

In middle- and upper-income communities the branches were likely to be separate agencies in their own buildings, although at first sometimes in rented quarters. In neighborhoods with foreign-born and low-income groups, they tended somewhat more to be located in neighborhood institutions – the park fieldhouse, the settlement house, the school. Whether in institutional quarters or nearby in a library building or rented quarters, these installations in low-income areas were thought of as part of the local renewal programs. They were to be neighborhood centers in the underprivileged areas.

In exceptional instances city branches did become significant centers of Americanization and human renewal. In New York City several East Side branches come to mind, in Chicago the Toman and South Chicago units, and others in additional cities. These agencies became an integral part of neighborhood life and made a discernible contribution to the process of acculturation for the underprivileged. No early Baltimore branches stand out in this respect. In the early years of the century, the funds at the disposal of Pratt were most limited, and by the twenties and thirties what money could be obtained had to go into building up the Central subject library.

The records of the period indicate that for the most part the early branch units over the country seldom became an integral part of neighborhood programs. Collections seldom took on an educational capacity directly suited to the special needs of the underprivileged. It proved difficult to find books suited to the foreign-born recently introduced to English. Staff members in the early branches were sometimes not oriented toward community work with low-income groups and only in exceptional cases became personally part of the local movement for raising up the masses. The early branches in the older parts of cities provided primarily lighter recreational reading for those who did not have the means to purchase novels and magazines.

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[12] Margaret E. Monroe, *Library Adult Education: The Biography of an Idea* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1963).

By the thirties and again in the fifties many cities began to close small neighborhood branches in the inner ring, first those in parks and settlement houses, and later replacing two or more small neighborhood units with one larger area building. The older agencies had not cut out a continuing place in the lives of people moving up the social and economic ladder. Other neighborhood educational programs also lost force—for example, parks which had maintained evening programs for adults discontinued them in most cases. The former ethnic neighborhoods became dispersed. The local population proved to be mobile and in a generation or two moved out as opportunity opened before them. They were replaced by others who did not utilize community educational facilities. The concept of the branch as a neighborhood center in underprivileged areas declined.

The newer branch units took on the form of separate centers for established readers now living farther out. They were not designed for the person just reaching to reading as an instrument of living. They tended to be distinctly larger than the older neighborhood units. Some cities, such as Chicago and Detroit, went a step further by the thirties and established extra large "regional" branches, to which the response was immediate and steady. With the almost universal ownership of automobiles after World War II, branch libraries continued to grow larger and to have or be near parking facilities. Some of the earlier units in older neighborhoods remained, but as weaker agencies with small collections and staffs.

This shift in the branch library from the small neighborhood unit to the larger area center was in response to reading needs and demands. A growing group of subject readers had developed. They could not be served by small collections with uneven subject coverage and little depth in any field. Users sought more specialized information, which could be provided only by larger staffs with reference capacity. Middle-class people were not confined as much as formerly to their immediate neighborhoods. Well-motivated readers, with automobiles at their disposal, were willing to travel longer distances for better service. It was natural for the distances between branches to become greater.

In the process the modern branch library program in the large city became oriented more toward the advantaged and less toward the disadvantaged. The latter by definition were not individuals seeking extensive subject collections, and they lived more within small neighborhoods. The newer, larger branches were farther away from run-down neighborhoods. This was true in a physical sense: some residents of the inner city either found themselves several miles from one of these new units or found that their former nearby outlet was replaced by one at a greater distance. And there may also have been an increasing psychological distance, in that the inner-city resident did not identify himself either with the monumental central unit on the one side or the modern, glass-enclosed area branch in a middle-class district on the other. City libraries have grown away from the disadvantaged as they sought with limited resources to meet the needs of those who use reading as a part of their advantaged way of life.

The public library has been so busy taking care of active readers, which is its business, that it has had little time for potential readers, which is its hope. Unless both purpose and method are modified, and aimed in part directly at the disadvantaged, the present program of the American public library is likely to have only limited effect on the problem of the poor and undereducated in America. This report proposes that Pratt Library take steps to reach out to the underprivileged; but to give some realistic basis to the action proposed, the recent development of Pratt must first be reviewed and then the character of reading and nonreading in Baltimore set forth in some detail.

IV. THE ENOCH PRATT FREE LIBRARY

The Pratt Library has been animated at different stages by a special sense of purpose. This sets it apart from many city libraries and is a primary source of its strength. More than the average library it has found and followed more or less clear goals, and thus more than the average library it has come to occupy a special place of prestige in its community.

It is true that examination of the annual reports of the first twenty-five years of the institution reveals little focus in program beyond a reflection of the general sense of service which characterized the Pratt gift. Year after year the emphasis was upon people reading more books and upon the need for more money. The books read reflected the accepted literature of the period, with the expanding element being the increasing public demand for reading for "amusement," as it was termed in the library reports. The reports do speak of reference materials and service, but not until the circulating or popular-reading aspect of the agency was established. It is interesting to watch this subject and reference theme appear first almost as an afterthought, then slowly become established, and in time move out in front as a distinctive characteristic of the institution. By the twenties definite and planned attention was being given to subject collections. Funds were still quite limited so that the subject emphasis held back the branch program. After World War I Pratt was made up of a series of relatively weak branches and a central unit with some but uneven subject and reference strength.

The Last Four Decades

This was the general situation which confronted Joseph L. Wheeler on his appointment as Librarian in 1926. Wheeler placed his impress upon Pratt, as few men do on an institution, and it is therefore worth noting his strong sense of library purpose. He was in the tradition of John Cotton Dana and William S. Learned, and it can be said of him that he carried that tradition to its apex. At the same time Wheeler marked something of the end of an era as compared with those who came immediately after.

He saw the library as a fountainhead of knowledge to which all should come and which he would help them use. This meant a strong central collection, staff with subject background, emphasis upon the individual relationship of skilled librarian and questioning reader throughout the organization, location of the library right at the crossroads, and publicity and community relations to draw more and more people to the fountainhead. It was no accident that he concentrated his energies on a new central building and a plan of service based on subject departments rather than on the weak branch program. He put more emphasis on bringing people to the well, which should be deep, than on carrying a cup of water out to them—not only in his view of buildings but throughout his concept of library service. In this he differed from the prevailing emphasis on local convenience of the library extension movement during the early decades of the century.

Wheeler technically stood apart from the preoccupation with adult education in libraries of his time. He seldom used the term himself, and he spoke out against the attention during the thirties to group activities as a library responsibility. Yet the concept at the heart of the adult education movement in libraries—the stimulation and guidance of reading, as distinct from the provision of any reading materials requested—was central to his own professional philosophy, and one might say that before other librarians came around to it he saw that an educational mission should animate every aspect of the library's work.[13]

The Wheeler program did not show special concern for the disadvantaged group growing up in Baltimore. His institution was for educated and uneducated, rich and poor alike. He rejoiced when it was used, no matter what the background of the reader. But it was more a matter of the individual coming to the library as conceived and organized than of adjusting either concept or form to reach those of limited means and education. The library was there, and Wheeler went out of his way to let as many people as possible know about it. If certain groups used it less than others, this was cause for special efforts to let them know what it had to offer, but not cause for new or modified programs or physical facilities to reach them. The disadvantaged person was to be urged to step out of his customary ranks and come over to the library provided for regular readers. In this he reflected the general attitude of public library administrators over the country toward less cultured readers. At the same time there were specific efforts to carry library service out, as in a colorful horse and buggy of books that went through the slum areas.

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[13] Margaret E. Monroe, *Library Adult Education: The Biography of an Idea* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1963).

Dr. Monroe stresses somewhat more the emphasis by Joseph Wheeler on the reference and information function, but this description of the Wheeler position on adult education is supported by her findings.

Wheeler built part of a public library, and he built it exceedingly well. More than that, he built it with very limited funds: Pratt received $.30 per capita when he arrived in 1926, and although the figure went up, the increase was slow during the depression years. Indeed, if he had sought to build branches and neighborhood services at the same time as central subject resources, it is possible that even he could have done each of these only half well.

Emerson Greenaway took over the directorship in 1945 and proceeded promptly to capitalize on the strength and prestige which Wheeler had gained for the agency. The administrative structure was reorganized for system-wide service, and funds were doubled within five years. A branch program was developed and launched with successful bond issues. Increased emphasis was given to working with community groups, and Pratt sponsored a series of educational activities which stand out among efforts over the country. The Greenaway concept was of a varied library program, including the fountainhead idea, and beyond that also embracing a concept of oases out among the people, either in their physical communities or in connection with their special-interest activities. This latter idea had been explicit in Enoch Pratt's early specification of branch libraries out among the people.

From 1951 to 1957 the varied program continued under Amy Winslow. She in fact had contributed directly to its development under both Wheeler and Greenaway. The central unit remained strong. The branch program was pushed. Group and community relationships were continued, although perhaps not at the pitch of the immediate postwar years. What Wheeler had called "publicity" was maintained and became public relations, including both the informing of people about the Library and the preservation of the public image which had been created.

Miss Winslow showed special concern about nonreaders in low-income areas. A project was presented in 1953 to the Ford Foundation asking for funds to conduct experimental programs in two depressed neighborhoods. The emphasis in one was to be upon intensive, local publicity to bring people into the existing facilities, and in the other upon work out in the community with groups and individuals. But this was ten years before poverty was recognized as a problem in the midst of plenty, and the money was not granted.

A second and significant step was also taken in 1953. The Pennsylvania Avenue Branch was opened, a unit of genuine strength specifically placed in a low-culture area rather than out in the newer middle-class communities. Here again the concept was that of drawing nonreaders to an accepted library facility, in this case a large branch with a varied collection and a professional staff of some size.

The Pratt Branch Program

The branch library program in Baltimore reflects general developments in library service in the country. The original Pratt gift called for "branches in the four parts of the city," and represents a pioneer statement on extension of urban library facilities beyond the central unit.

The conditions of the gift were carried out in the opening of six branches by 1900. They necessarily were modest units with a few thousand volumes each. The original Pratt specification of $50,000 of annual maintenance from the city, which continued to be the amount of support for a quarter-century, had to be spread over the main library and the branches, so that they long continued to be agencies of very limited strength. By 1929 twenty-seven branches, all relatively small, had been opened, and then there was a hiatus until 1947.

Several of the early branches, established in what is now the older section of Baltimore, have since been closed, and those remaining are today the less impressive links in the branch chain. Even after World War II the larger number of Pratt branches were in this category of weak units established just before and after the turn of the century. It was then a system with an exceptional central unit and substandard branches.

An accelerated program for branch development was drawn up in 1947 and revised in 1958. Four bond issues were passed between 1947 and 1962 to put it into effect. Fourteen branches have been opened or enlarged since 1952.

Eleven of these units are more than three miles from the center of Baltimore, well beyond the inner city. The branch plans in the early part of the recent program were designed primarily to correct the lack of community facilities in the newer middle-class sections of the city which grew up as the outward movement of population continued. They are distinctly larger than the older units and are spaced at wider intervals.

The earlier emphasis on outlying areas since 1950 is reported as a description and not as an indictment of Pratt branch policy. Funds were not unlimited, and priorities had to be established. It was natural to invest first in newer areas without any facilities and with ready-made reading publics. Many of the people in the outer sections formerly lived near a Pratt unit and were actually former users, whereas the new people who replaced them in the older neighborhoods often came from rural districts which had little or no library resources. Furthermore, no one has been sure just what should be done in the inner city. Use of existing branches there is declining, neighborhoods are run down, and the future of slum districts is hard to predict.

It would be incorrect to maintain that the Pratt administration has given no thought to underprivileged neighborhoods. The Pennsylvania Avenue Branch, opened in 1953, is a notable experiment in seeking to reach this kind of area. The 1958 standards for branch development specifically mention the special demands of service in such neighborhoods, and in June, 1964, a substantial unit was opened in an older part of the city to the west (Hollins-Payson) and another is being actively planned to the east in the vicinity of the Johns Hopkins Hospital.

The Pennsylvania Avenue Branch merits our attention, because it was expressly designed to serve a part of the inner city and now has over ten years of experience behind it. This is a large unit with a collection of over 50,000 volumes, a modern building located at a strategic corner, and a professional staff complement based upon its program rather than on number of books circulated. The neighborhood is distinctly one of low educational and cultural background. The essential aim of this unit has been to use basic library methods and adapt them to the needs of the particular community served. The collection was selected with this in mind and includes an unusual number of easy-to-read titles about everyday informational topics. The staff also has been selected to serve persons of limited cultural background. One of the strongest features of the program has been individual advice and guidance, with a general policy of approaching all visitors in the library if they appear in any way to need assistance. Special effort was made to work with community and group activities, particularly with church leaders and adult classes, but response has not been notable. Film programs were tried several years back but have not been used in recent years.

In general the branch has reached the better educated individuals in this underprivileged area, and it has also been used substantially by students.[14] One-third of the adult users have come from outside the surrounding community, presumably attracted by the convenient location and relatively strong collection. A survey in 1958, five years after the branch opened, showed the adults to be almost equally divided between men and women, to be below forty years of age in most cases, and likely to be members of a professional group such as teachers.[15]

In other words, the response has been typical of that to any large community branch—children, students, adults with high school or college education. Because the area does not have as many educated adults as the newer middle-class sections, adult use has been relatively small for an agency and collection of considerable size. The adult home circulation of books from Pennsylvania Avenue was 56,157 in 1965; the three other branches in the system that have collections of 50,000 volumes or over (Edmondson Avenue, Northwood, and Pimlico) had an average adult circulation of almost 200,000. The circulation to children from Pennsylvania Avenue is about two-thirds that from branches of comparable size, even though the districts within one mile of Pennsylvania Avenue have more children than in the other areas. On the other hand, a comparison of use of this exceptional branch with other outlets of less strength in somewhat similar neighborhoods (for example, the Broadway, Brooklyn, Canton, and Fells Point units) shows almost twice as much home circulation.

The point of these figures is neither to praise nor to criticize the Pennsylvania Avenue Branch—the measure of a library is not solely how many people use it but whether any significant number find it a source of opportunity—but rather to observe the response to a very strong branch in a neighborhood of low cultural background. In brief the conclusion is that the number of users has not been as great as in middle-class districts, but the kinds of readers have been much the same.

A special study at Pennsylvania Avenue directed to users of relatively low education turned up a certain number of individuals in this category.[16] They were attracted by the scope of resources of the branch and even more by a feeling of being at home and benefiting from the individual advice and guidance of the staff. The report does not permit any generalization about the total "outreach" to such individuals, because only twenty-nine low-education users were interviewed. The study did not turn up evidence that the Pennsylvania Avenue Branch has directly reached any wide group of previous adult nonreaders of limited background.

While the Pennsylvania Avenue Branch adapted collection and methods to its community, its fundamental approach was the accepted one for branch libraries in recent years. The collection is quite large and the branch itself large in line with the supermarket concept of service. The 1958 Extension Survey justifies fewer and larger branches on ". . . the success of super-foodmarkets and suburban shopping centers," but this area has few supermarkets and it certainly is not suburban. Groceries and other commodities are provided by a variety of relatively small stores. The section is broken into quite separate neighborhoods, rather than being a large community with any degree of unity, and by and large people live either within the neighborhoods or in small block areas. We should not too quickly carry over the modern symbols of the automobile and the supermarket to the slum neighborhood; a better touchstone for library service would be the distance a child can walk alone to a branch, because in many cases his parents will not bother to bring him.

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[14] Mary M. Harispe, "Role of the Public Library in an Underprivileged Neighborhood," MSLS thesis, Catholic University of America, 1961.

[15] Annual Report of Pennsylvania Avenue Branch, 1958.

[16] Peter Hiatt, "Public Library Branch Services for Adults of Low Education," Ph.D. thesis, Rutgers—The State University, 1963.

It is significant that Pennsylvania Avenue has attracted a considerable number of children. They too live within the small neighborhoods, yet in some measure they have broken out to use a large and attractive library. This is even more encouraging when it is recalled that these are children who are not likely to be driven to the branch by their parents. Whether they would have read even more if two or more smaller outlets had been established nearer their homes, but using the same idea of service, is a matter of conjecture on which there is no evidence.

The same concept of the large central branch is being applied in continuing plans for the inner city. Over recent years several small outlets have been closed (Fremont Avenue, Locust Point, Mount Clare, and South Central Avenue), and as a result the average distance which some low-education families must travel to get to a library has increased. The Hollins-Payson Branch, opened in 1964, is similar in size to the others which have been built farther out in recent years, and it is intended to serve a relatively large area. The basic policy remains the same for the nearby area to the east, with one larger unit planned to replace two small existing branches.

For all its contribution, the Pennsylvania Avenue Branch has not proved that the large branch serving a group of neighborhoods is effective for underprivileged areas, if the purpose is to reach as many of the local people as possible. Before committing too much to this concept, it is suggested that further study be made of the area reached by large branches in such neighborhoods, and some evidence on this point will be presented in the Deiches Study that will deal with the branch program. The Pratt branch plans call for the smallest unit to serve a population of 30,000 people, and most newer branches serve considerably more. It is interesting to note that the Human Renewal Program recently developed by city agencies calls for local centers serving some 2,500-3,000 people in the low-income areas. This may provide an opportunity to experiment with more localized organization of library extension. In addition, in the final section of this report, proposing a program for library service to the disadvantaged, it is recommended that an experiment be tried that goes contrary to large branches, in the form of special-purpose outlets or reading centers serving small neighborhoods within walking distance.

The several stages of development of the branch library program in Baltimore are thus clear. Pratt was an early pioneer in providing neighborhood outlets. These were relatively small at the outset and remained limited in program for many years. Some of the earlier units have more recently been closed, while others remain restricted in resources. Branch development since World War II has been devoted more to newer middle-class sections, in the form of large units each serving several neighborhoods. Quite recently attention has come around to the older core in the center, with plans going forward for large interneighborhood units to replace smaller agencies which have been there for some time.

In the next few years substantial attention must inevitably be given to the branch program in the inner area. This is natural after the primary attention that has been given to outer areas for a decade. Increased attention must also be given to underprivileged areas because in Baltimore they no longer constitute a small circle within a predominantly middle-class city. The "action area" developed for the Baltimore Human Renewal Program encompasses almost one-quarter of the city population, and this does not include all disadvantaged neighborhoods. What in the past has been a problem of the minority of the people will before long become a majority problem, as the low-income areas spread. An opportunity presents itself to see if the Pratt Library in part of its branch program can make a special contribution to the renewed effort of Baltimore to lift up its masses. The future branch program of Pratt Library for the inner city should be restudied to provide outlets and agencies suited to the conditions and human characteristics of this section rather than being copied from the outer city.

Current Community Action Program

While this study was in progress, an unusual opportunity presented itself, on which Pratt promptly capitalized. The Library had been an active party in planning sponsored by the Health and Welfare Council of the Baltimore Area, which led to "A Plan for Action" for the inner city. When this plan was applied beginning in 1965 to a "target area" in southeastern Baltimore, the Library was an integral part of the experiment. The following statement from the supervisor of library services in the program briefly describes the work thus far, and a more complete report appears in a recent journal article.[17]

As of July 1, 1965, the Pratt Library has been participating on a contractual basis in the Community Action Program of Baltimore thus taking the first step in one of the recommendations of this report—"working with and through other agencies and organizations in contact with the disadvantaged." Using the Community Action Centers, as they are established in the Action Area of the city, the Library is seeking to reach out with information and ideas in whatever form proves effective, be it books, pamphlets, magazines, films, tapes, pictures, music, games, etc. As needs are identified through direct contact with people living in the ten square blocks served by each Center and in consultation with the Community Action Counselors and the staff of other agencies working in the Community Action Program, reading, listening, and viewing materials are bought and placed in the Centers. Many of the books are paperbacks, so that for each dollar spent a larger number of books can be bought. In addition, as noted in this report, the paperback or pamphlet is less formidable to people not accustomed to libraries and books. Some popular magazines and newspapers have been bought for the Centers for the same reason. Many of the adult paperbacks are placed in the Centers on wire paperback stands to be picked up and returned without a formal charging procedure while, perhaps, an individual is waiting for another service at the Center.

The program is being run by a staff of four professional librarians—a children's specialist, an adult and young adult specialist, a children's assistant, and a supervisor—a clerical-secretary, in charge of clerical procedures and training, and twenty clerical aides who are residents of the Action Area. The aides are trained to man the library rooms, read or tell stories to young children, run a film projector, and assist in the work of the Headquarters Office. The training will, it is hoped, help develop good work habits and some usable skills for advancement. These aides also serve as important links in interpreting the community to the professional library staff and library services to the community.

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[17] Evelyn Levy, "Library Service in the Inner City," *Wilson Library Bulletin*, January, 1967, pp. 470-77.

V. READERS AND NONREADERS

It would be just as well to admit at the outset that surprisingly little is known about reading and readers, whether in city, suburbs, or country. When it comes to nonreaders, it is possible that we know more about the cultural life of those who lived around the Dead Sea two thousand years ago than about the nonreaders in our midst.

There has of course been extensive study of the teaching of reading and of reading within the classroom. Attention was also given at the University of Chicago during the thirties to what might be called the social psychology of reading—to the who and what of reading outside the classroom—but this interest declined once the more obvious census-type sources had been exhausted. These earlier studies included library use and were summarized in the late forties in one of the volumes of the Public Library Inquiry.[18] Since then there has been relatively little research in nonschool reading either by librarians or by social scientists, even though reading is one of the most pervasive activities of our society. The paucity of recent knowledge about reading is demonstrated in a symposium published a few years back, which is limited either to speculation by individual social scientists or to observations by publishers about the commercial aspects of reading.[19]

The present study can make no wide claim to correcting the situation because its data are limited to one metropolitan area and to selected problems of one of the institutions of reading, the public library. But it can claim that it is based on direct contact with readers and nonreaders and upon evidence concerning their reading or lack of it. And its results provide some grounds for seeing prospects and problems in using reading and the library as a means for aiding the disadvantaged portion of the urban population.

What Makes a Book Reader?

From the study of a representative sample of adults in the Baltimore area there emerges some idea of the social factors connected with reading and particularly with book reading. This could not be found from information about library users alone but came primarily from hour-long interviews with both readers and nonreaders and comparison of their backgrounds.

A generalized summary of these factors is given here because it helps to define the disadvantaged person as reader and nonreader. It also serves to warn against hoping for immediate and pronounced results from any short-term program, for the factors working for and against reading are clearly deep in the social background of the individual and will not suddenly be changed by putting out publicity on the virtues of reading or by buying books which the disadvantaged person ought to read. The factors associated with book reading are purposely oversimplified at this point and presented in a sense facetiously, but they are consistent with the detailed findings of the study.

If you want to produce book readers, you have only to keep in mind an "easy" three-step prescription. As a first step, simply see to it that infants are born into families that are already made up of readers. This not only exposes the child to reading but also sets up a scale of values by which reading is done to gain approval, and usually the bookish parents promote the desired behavior by reading with the child and urging his response. You have a ready check on whether the prescription is working by the time the child is eight years of age. If he has a public library card by that age, all is going well and you have a reasonable chance of ending up with an adult book reader. If he does not have a library card, extra doses of the next two stages are indicated.

Rather dramatic evidence of the relation between reading in the home and library use by children is presented in Table 2. A child in a reading home is at least three times as likely to be a public library user as a child in a home where neither parent reads books. It is hard to believe that the youngsters are by nature different in the nonreading home; the significant difference must be in the home environment and the conduct of the parents.

As the second ingredient, education and more education is needed to make a reader. We will see that education is overwhelmingly the factor most closely associated with reading, and not for students alone—education at least through high school, and better yet through college. If you have a dropout, the cause is as good as lost. But don't make the mistake of considering education a panacea, for we will see that one-fifth of college graduates do not read a book from

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[18] Bernard Berelson, *The Library's Public* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949).

[19] Jacob M. Price (ed.), *Reading for Life* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959).

TABLE 2

CHILDREN'S USE OF PUBLIC LIBRARY COMPARED WITH FAMILY BACKGROUND

Extent of Use	Per cent of "Reading" Families*	Per cent of "Nonreading" Families**
Frequent library use; at least once a month	30.7	12.0
Occasional library use; at least once in last year	41.7	8.3
Little if any use; not once in last year	27.2	79.2
Data not obtained	.4	.5

*Reading families: both parents read at least one book in past year.

**Nonreading families: neither parent read a book in past year.

year's beginning to year's end—at least among college graduates in the Baltimore area. For these, look back to the first stage or on to the third stage for the cause.

The third ingredient in the prescription is more subtle but no less important. If you want a reader—that is, a continuing book reader through life—you must have an adult who participates. Participates in what? In almost anything. In a church, although the evidence shows less relation between churchgoing and reading than among other activities. In labor or business groups. In the affairs of the neighborhood or the community. In election campaigns or sports events. Best of all, in cultural activities—concerts, plays, exhibits. There is a relation between reading and all of these forms of participation. It is best to have active participation—leadership of a group or actual contribution to a discussion club or a drama group—but settle for spectator membership if you can't get leadership.

For reading, like virtue, is not something one gets or buys but something one practices. Reading occurs if the adult is exposed to stimulation. The popular conception of the reader as recluse was not found in this study. The organization member reads more than the nonmember, and the organization officer more than the member. The person who writes to his congressman reads twice as much as the person who doesn't. The mother with all the demands of running a household reads more than the widow living alone. The majority of people read books in response to stimulation, not in response to boredom. If really empty time confronts the individual, he is more likely to turn the television knob than to seek out a book. Book reading may appear to be retreat, but actually it is more a regrouping of forces, a consideration of new intelligence, and a moment of refreshment before returning to the fray.

The nonreader typically comes from the opposite background. His parents were not readers, there were few if any books in the home, nor can he recall anyone reading to him as a child. He did not get a public library card until he was in high school, if then. If an older person, he probably did not finish secondary school. The person he married is probably not a book reader. He is not active in groups or organizations, nor does he take on any civic or community responsibilities but is isolated within his family and in a small circle of persons almost exactly the same as himself.

This is a statistical pattern and reflects typical or usual behavior. Of course some individuals break out of the pattern, particularly if they have an extra strong dose of one or another of the three ingredients. Thus, adults who are members of three or more organizations, and an officer or committee chairman in one or more, are likely to be book readers even if they did not finish high school. It is worth remembering that the pattern working against reading can be broken, for that is precisely what is attempted with an institutional program for the disadvantaged. We try to make readers of those whose backgrounds push them the other way.

To be realistic it must be remembered that a reading and library program for the "disadvantaged" means by definition a program for those who (1) were not born into reading families, (2) do not have extensive education, and (3) do not participate in the range of urban institutions and activities. These are the underprivileged in functional terms. Part of the question before us is whether they are also the dispossessed, banished from the intellectual and cultural stream represented by reading.

The Reading Public

The size and nature of the reading public obviously depends on the question of what is read. There are many reading publics, from the almost universal groups that read street signs or labels on grocery packages to the very select group that reads scientific quarterlies or avant-garde poetry.

No less than 90 per cent of adults in the Baltimore area read a newspaper three times or more per week. Presumably they read for information, amusement, and excitement—which is why most people read. The papers read may be scandal sheets, and the reading may be superficial. But most persons do pick up a printed page with some regularity to relate themselves to the aspects of life that interest them. The reading public so defined is very broad, and in this sense nonreaders are relatively rare in our society. Even among adults who never completed high school, over three-quarters read a newspaper regularly. In this rather loose definition, only one in four among the disadvantaged is genuinely a nonreader.

Baltimore provides a revealing spectrum in the newspapers available. *The New York Times* is carried on various newsstands and is of course available by mail. The Sunpapers appear morning and night. And there is a Hearst paper, *The News American.* Table 3 shows their readership by a cross section of Baltimore area residents and indicates that each of the three local papers has a regular and sizable public.

Or the reading of newspapers might be dismissed as habit, in some cases having no more significance than looking out the window for an idle hour. We can then go on to magazine reading. Over 80 per cent of the adults interviewed claim that they glance through or read a magazine at least once a month. This is almost universally true of those who are high school graduates and holds also for 62 per cent of adults who did not complete high school. This was double-checked by answers to questions spotted through the interviews, asking about magazines purchased at one point and about magazines actually read at another. Seventy-six per cent of the families claimed they either subscribed to or regularly bought at least one magazine, and in many cases the interviewer was able to see evidence of this in the home.

TABLE 3

REGULAR READING OF THREE GROUPS OF NEWSPAPERS

	Per cent of Adult Population
New York Times	.6
Sunpapers	
Morning Sun	24.0
Evening Sun	34.8
Hearst paper	
News American	30.4

The titles read naturally extend over a considerable quality range. Small groups read the elite titles. A

TABLE 4

MAGAZINES READ REGULARLY

Magazine Groups	All Adult Respondents	Adult Respondents Not High School Graduates
News, commentary, picture	72.5%	56.6%
Home, garden, craft	53.5	26.0
Women's, fashion	53.4	30.2
Men's and women's story magazines	33.2	22.7
Religious publications	20.7	24.7
Literary, scholarly, special	11.0	1.1
Professional, trade	9.2	2.1
Popular scientific	6.5	4.3
Other	.8	.7
Do not read magazines	17.7	36.7

(*Note:* Total more than 100 per cent; some persons read more than one kind of magazine regularly.)

sizable minority reads religious publications. Story magazines, including confession and movie titles, have a following, although they are not a majority interest. Home and women's periodicals are read by more than half of the population. The most popular group, by a considerable margin, is composed of the magazines of general information and commentary (the news and pictorial weeklies and general publications such as *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Reader's Digest*). The order of preference remains about the same when people are asked which type of magazine they would miss most if it were not available to them.

Adults who did not complete high school showed much the same preferences, although over one-third evidently seldom if ever look at any magazine. The magazine readers with less education are relatively more interested in religious and story publications, and less interested in home and garden and of course in literary and professional journals. At the same time it should be noticed that their preferences are for much the same type of periodical as persons with more education, with news and picture titles and women's titles at the top of the list. One could say that the magazine habits of adults of limited background are "middle-class" in nature, whether by preference or as a result of what is available.

It is to be noted that a substantial reading public turns to magazines regularly, using the printed page to relate themselves to the world in which they live. This includes persons of limited education. Any dismissal of the American public as composed primarily of nonreaders would have to disregard the millions of magazines perused each week. In fact, magazine reading is an important leisure-time activity of the American adult, second only to television viewing and more frequent than movie-going and attendance at sports events.

This widespread foothold on reading must be remembered when we come to consider programs for reaching "nonreaders." It is easy but not accurate to draw a sharp line with book readers on one side and the great unwashed on the other. This amounts to designating one kind of printed page as the real thing and excluding others. We will shortly see that there clearly is a small group of dedicated book readers who show great purpose and sustained attention in their use of the printed page. At the other extreme there is another small group that never uses print unless required to locate the nearest bar and to distinguish among brands of beer. But between there is a considerable group that reads at intervals, presumably for combined motives of amusement and interest, and often in magazines.

It is instructive to note the differences between the nature of magazine reading and of book reading, and particularly of book use in libraries. Magazines can be obtained much more conveniently, whether from the corner newsstand or from one's own mailbox; much less effort is needed to get them. The Deiches interviews show that magazines are often loaned or given away after being read, to an extent that does not hold for books. This applies in particular to persons of limited cultural background, who often said that they got their magazines from a relative, friend, or neighbor. The magazine increasingly has a visual appeal as contrasted with the more sedate appearance of the hardcover book. The magazine usually is not pinpointed as to subject matter, and one's interests do not have to be nearly as defined and disciplined before turning to it. Its communication is presented in short pieces, easy to take, requiring less sustained concentration. In fact, the reader can reject various of the articles within an issue without feeling that it is the wrong vehicle for him.

Mass-circulation magazines can readily be criticized —for oversimplification, for seeking a journalistic angle or slant, for incompleteness and superficiality. But the point here is that they cover a wide range of topics, from presidential elections and urban renewal to last week's sports event and the exotic land far away, and that many people who do not read books and do not visit libraries use them to engage in a genuine act of communication through print. And it is worth remembering that most libraries, including Pratt, do not feature magazines and acquire them more as reference and study sources than as media of free reading.

If by "reading public" is meant book readers, then we are dealing with a considerably smaller group, a minority of the total adult public. The Gallup Poll in 1963 found 48 per cent of the population that had read a book in the past year and 18 per cent reading a book at the time they were questioned. It is interesting that these figures show little change as compared with a study fifteen years earlier, despite the great increase of paperback books in the interval.[20] The Deiches figures are similar but somewhat lower—42 per cent having read a book in the past year (paperbacks included), 17 per cent at the time of the interview. The lower Deiches figures are probably due to the fact that the sample used is from a large and older city, which has a lower educational level than the national cross section used in the Gallup sample. Certainly adults of limited educational background are less likely to read books, only 16 per cent of those not high school graduates having read a book (other than the Bible) in the past year. The

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[20] Survey Research Center, University of Michigan, "The Public Library and the People; a National Survey Done for the Public Library Inquiry," Mimeographed, 1948.

TABLE 5

READING PUBLICS FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF MATERIAL

Reading Groups	Per cent of Total Adult Population	Per cent of Adults Not High School Graduates
Read newspaper regularly	95.0	90.7
Read magazine at least once a month	82.3	62.4
Read at least one book (other than Bible) in past year	42.3	16.2
Read "quality" materials	9.6	1.6

lower figure may also be due to the fact that the Deiches interviews lasted for an hour and provided internal checks if some individuals tended to inflate their reading activity at one or another point. Just who the book readers are and what they read will be analyzed in some detail in the next section.

The progression can be narrowed down further, to "discriminating" or "quality" readers. These have been defined in three ways for analysis in this study: those who read *The New York Times* regularly, those who read "literary" magazines *(Saturday Review, Atlantic Monthly, Harper's)* or specialized journals regularly, and those who read three or more books of recognized quality and stature in the past year. They constitute a select group who combine quality and sustained attention in their reading conduct. Putting the three together, we are down to a reading elite of under 10 per cent of the total out-of-school population.

The public that is most relevant for a library study is the group that reads books, for this is the stock in trade of the institution. This constitutes less than half the total adult population and one-sixth of those of limited education. However, it must be remembered, particularly in thinking forward to a library program for "nonreaders," that at least twice as many people use print other than books for utilitarian, entertainment, or cultural purposes in the broadest sense, albeit not necessarily material on a small sheet bound into a hard cover. Adults who are not high school graduates are four times more likely to be magazine readers than book readers. A library program does not have to be limited to books, nor even necessarily to printed materials.

We thus see that there are several "reading publics" in a city such as Baltimore. Ten per cent constitute a quality elite—30 per cent more read at least one book a year—40 per cent additional read one or more magazines—which leaves only some 20 per cent who might be called "nonreaders." Even this last figure must be qualified, for all but 5 per cent do make use of a newspaper.

The foregoing may not be a picture of a particularly literate society, but it does show considerable prevalence of reading. At least four-fifths of adults already engage to some extent in the activity for which the public library exists, but almost three-quarters of the readers obtain their reading materials from sources other than the public library, and over half prefer the magazine form which is not emphasized by libraries.

Social Composition of the Reading Public

To see just how readers compare with nonreaders, a series of tables was compiled relating the two groups to the usual social indices. "Readers" were taken to be the approximately 40 per cent of the population who had read a book in the past year; most of these people also read magazines. "Nonreaders" on the other hand were taken to be the 20 per cent of persons at the other end of the scale who do not read any magazine regularly and have not read a book since leaving school. This leaves out a considerable middle group of magazine readers who fall between the two, and who can arbitrarily be classified either as "readers" or as "nonreaders" depending on the predilections of the person doing the classifying. To carry the analysis one step further, "discriminating" readers are added in some cases to distinguish among levels of book reading.

The first table shows the clearest social relationship, the association of reading and education. About 70 per cent of the adult book readers are at least high school graduates, while 30 per cent are not; in the adult population as a whole the proportions are just about reversed, with 34 per cent being at least high school graduates and 66 per cent not. Eighty-five per cent of the nonreaders have not completed high school. Thirty-four per cent of the readers have attended college, whereas the figure for nonreaders who have been to college is 2.4 per cent. Narrowing the analysis down to the readers of better material, we see the further influence of education in that 63 per cent of this group have attended college. The general relation of reading to education can be seen by looking at the figures across

TABLE 6

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF READERS AND NONREADERS

Educational Level	Per cent of Population	Per cent of Nonreaders*	Per cent of Readers**	Per cent of Discriminating Readers***
Elementary school or less	45.8	57.2	9.5	6.0
Some high school	20.5	27.8	19.4	10.8
High school graduation	20.2	12.5	37.4	20.5
Some college	6.6	1.6	13.4	19.3
College graduation	6.9	.8	20.3	43.4

***Do not read magazines or books.**

****Have read book within past year.**

*****Regularly read *New York Times*, literary journals, or distinguished books.**

the first and last lines of the table: for persons of limited education, the percentage moves down sharply as one shifts from nonreaders to readers to discriminating readers; and for college graduates the change is equally clear but reversed. The critical point in separating readers from nonreaders is high school graduation. It is, however, interesting to note that 29 per cent of the readers and almost 17 per cent of the discriminating readers did not complete high school—another indication that certain individuals do break out of the limitations of their background.

Economic levels are positively related to education, with better-educated individuals tending to have higher incomes. Tables 7 and 8 reflect this correlation, showing that persons in the upper brackets, both in dollar income and in prestige of occupational groups, tend to read substantially more than those in the lower brackets. Forty-four per cent of readers are members of families with incomes of $7,000 or more, but only 12 per cent of nonreaders.

TABLE 7

FAMILY INCOME AND BOOK READING

Income Level	Per cent of Population	Per cent of Nonreaders	Per cent of Readers
Less than $4,000	23.0	37.5	13.9
$4,000-$7,000	36.3	50.0	41.9
$7,000-$10,000	23.1	11.6	24.9
Over $10,000	17.6	.8	19.2

Similarly, 42 per cent of readers classify in the professional, managerial, and middle groups, but only 11-12 per cent of the nonreaders. Book reading clearly tends to be an activity of the established economic groups in our society.

At the same time the other side of the picture must be kept in balance. Fourteen per cent of book readers are members of the lowest income group, families not much above the subsistence level. Twenty-one per cent are semiskilled or unskilled workers and persons in service trades. We must look shortly with more care at this group that has broken free of the usual low-education, low-income, nonreading circle.

TABLE 8

OCCUPATIONAL PRESTIGE CLASS AND BOOK READING

Occupational Group	Per cent of Nonreaders	Per cent of Readers
Elite (professional and managerial)	1.7	18.0
Middle-middle (proprietors, junior executives)	9.7	24.2
Lower-middle (sales, clerical, skilled workers)	42.4	37.0
Upper-lower (semiskilled and service trades)	32.3	15.3
Lower-lower (unskilled)	13.9	5.5

TABLE 9

ADULT BOOK READING

Reader Groups	Baltimore City (Per cent)	Baltimore Suburbs (Per cent)
Book readers (read one or more books in last year)	41.2	48.3
Former book readers (read one or more books since school, but none in last year)	18.9	30.1
Nonbook readers (no book read since leaving school)	39.3	21.5
Data not obtained	.6	–

Suburban dwellers on the average are more likely to be book readers than city residents, as shown in Table 9. This again is a reflection of educational differences. The median school years completed by adults living in Baltimore City is 8.9, whereas the figure for the metropolitan area outside the city is 10.9. It is, therefore, not surprising to find that while almost two-fifths of the city people have not read a book since school days, the figure for the suburbs is approximately one-fifth. It is also interesting to note in Table 9 that almost 60 per cent of city residents have not read a book in the past year—so that less than half the adult population constitute the possible "clientele" of the public library as its service program and resources are presently conceived.

Previous studies have noted the decline in reading with age. This is confirmed in the Baltimore area, in that 14 per cent of the population is sixty-five or over, but only 9 per cent of book readers are at this level. The largest relative representation of book readers is among persons thirty-five to forty-four years of age. However, the decline in reading with age is not sharp enough to dismiss the elder citizens from any library program. In fact, when education is held constant, the falling off in reading over the years is relatively small. The college graduate is almost as likely to read when he retires as when he is in his prime. And as the education level of the adult population continues upward, reading will occupy a larger place in the activities of older people.

Social Participation and Reading

The relation between reading and participation can be seen first by taking the extent to which individuals engage in or attend contemporary institutions. In the broadest sense these extend from the church through the entertainment agencies (movies, sports events) to cultural activities (concerts, theater, art exhibits). Lack of regular participation in any of these is associated with nonreading, both for the more-educated and the less-educated group. Reading increases for both groups depending on participation in one, two, or three or more institutions.

TABLE 10

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF READERS AND NONREADERS

Age Groups	Per cent of Total Population	Per cent of Nonreaders	Per cent of Readers
21 to 24 years	7.7	4.6	6.7
25 to 34	21.8	14.5	22.2
35 to 44	23.8	30.6	31.1
45 to 54	18.7	16.5	18.3
55 to 64	13.8	18.7	12.5
65 and over	14.2	15.1	9.1

TABLE 11

INSTITUTIONAL PARTICIPATION AND BOOK READING

Institutional Activity	Per cent of High School Graduates Who Are Readers	Per cent of Nonhigh School Graduates Who Are Readers
No regular participation	46.6	9.2
Participation in one institution	57.6	22.8
Participation in two institutions	63.1	23.9
Participation in three or more institutions	74.8	31.7

Activity in voluntary organizations tells the same story. These are the groups that grow up around churches, job associations, civic activities, professional groups, and cultural activities. Reading is more likely to occur if the individual reaches out to one or more of these groups, and it is likely to be greater if he becomes an officer in such a group. Once again the relationship holds for less-educated as well as more-educated adults. It is among the ranks of the disadvantaged who do participate in organizations that the first inroad on adult nonreading is likely to occur. The voluntary groups can be further broken down to show a progression in relation to reading. Church groups and vocational associations (business organizations and labor unions) have the lowest relation; members of these groups are not much more likely to read than nonmembers. Civic and community groups (P.T.A., women's clubs, etc.) do have a positive relationship to book reading. The greatest connection is with "cultural" associations (theater groups, art groups, reading clubs). Another strong correlation exists between possession in the home of works of art (paintings, prints, ceramics, etc.) and reading. It is clear that individuals most active culturally are also the most frequent book readers.

It is interesting to see this factor of participation turn up in various forms. In terms of activity among women in group and institutional associations, single women are most active, married women less so, and widows least of all. This is also their order in book reading, as shown in Table 13.

Similarly, a person who has ever written a letter to a newspaper or to a congressman is almost twice as likely to be a book reader as one who has not done so. Almost the same relation holds for those who have ever given a talk before a group. The difference is not quite as great when a comparison is made between those who do and do not give much attention to election campaigns, but once again the involved individual is more likely to be a book reader.

When the net is cast a little wider, to include origins and values of individuals, the relationships that might be anticipated often do not hold. For example, it might be assumed that the nonreading group in Baltimore would be composed to an unusual extent of newcomers to the city, individuals from rural or small town districts who have been attracted to the industrial employment in the area. Table 14 shows that this is not the case. Some of the nonreaders do come from small towns and farms. But slightly more of the nonreaders than of the

TABLE 12

VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS AND BOOK READING

Organization Activity	Per cent of High School Graduates Who Are Readers	Per cent of Nonhigh School Graduates Who Are Readers
Nonmembers of associations	59.2	19.3
Members of associations	63.5	27.1
Officers of associations	74.4	30.1

TABLE 13

BOOK READING AND STATUS OF WOMEN

Groups	Per cent Who Read Books
Single women	68.1
Married women	42.5
Widows	31.0

readers grew up in Baltimore, so that the city is producing its own crop of nonreaders. In the same fashion, no marked differences were found when the length of time of living at the present address was compared for readers and nonreaders. Persons who move frequently are about as likely to be readers or nonreaders as those who stay in one location.

Readers and nonreaders are not distinguishable on how they rate Baltimore as a place to live, as shown in Table 15. A rather high portion of both groups, close to 70 per cent, give a response of "good" or "excellent" to this question.

So far as the Deiches interviews were able to go into the matter of problems or worries before respondents, few marked differences were identified as between readers and nonreaders. It is true that readers listed the threat of war and nonreaders worries about money as their greatest concerns. But for the most part differences that exist between the two groups are related to the fact that readers tend to have higher incomes: they are therefore less worried about money but more worried about their children and the threat of war, whereas the nonreaders tend to place questions of money and health at the top of their lists. The responses on this question should not be given any great weight, because the question did not elicit clear or definite answers and over one-fifth of the persons interviewed did not give any answer.

Home Exposure to Books

A relationship between reading and the existence of books in the home environment of the individual was found in the Deiches Studies. This is the third of the clear-cut relationships—first and strongest to formal education, then to participation in group and institutional life, and now (although less closely) to a bookish environment.

Early exposure to books in the home bears a relationship to reading in later life. Seventy-two per cent of the persons now not reading books report that there were either no books or very few in the home when they were young. The figure for current book readers is 54 per cent. The statistics are similar when readers and nonreaders were asked whether they remember their parents as readers of books. It is interesting, however, to note that almost half the present readers did come from homes that were not bookish. Book reading is more likely to occur if there was early home contact with books, but it is evidently not an essential element.

Sixty-three per cent of the present book readers recall being read to in the home when they were young. Here the figure for nonreaders is just over 20 per cent. This is a sharp difference and suggests that the activity of reading in the home is more significant than the mere presence of books.

Early contact with the public library serves significantly as a factor associated with adult reading. The earlier the contact, the more likely the adult is to be a book reader, and in fact almost three-fourths of the youngest library users will develop a lifelong reading habit.

It is not surprising to find that present readers have books in their homes. This is as natural as for a golfer to have golf clubs. What is more surprising is that almost one-third of nonreaders live in homes that do

TABLE 14

COMMUNITY OF ORIGIN OF READERS AND NONREADERS

Origin	Per cent of Readers	Per cent of Nonreaders
Grew up in Baltimore	56.4	58.7
Grew up in another city of same size	9.5	6.2
Grew up on farm or in small town	29.8	33.4
Data not obtained	4.3	1.6

TABLE 15

READING AND RATING OF BALTIMORE AS A PLACE TO LIVE

Rating	Per cent of Readers	Per cent of Nonreaders
Excellent	24.4	23.8
Good	46.4	44.1
Fair	18.4	19.7
Poor	4.9	5.1
Don't know; no opinion	5.9	7.3

have books beyond the Bible and a cookbook. These are presumably books read by the other adult member of the family, husband or wife, or they are books that are mere decoration.

It is evident again that exposure to books alone does not make adult book readers. We have seen that almost one-third of the nonreaders have some books around them at home and also had books in the family when they were young. Contact with books appears to be significant if one or both of the first two factors in book reading are met: education at least to high school graduation and participation currently in the associational, institutional, and cultural life of the community.

Reading of Young Adults

The Deiches report on student reading showed only 15 per cent of high school pupils to be "nonreaders" in the sense of not reading books other than textbooks. In contrast with this, young adults age twenty to thirty represent the lowest group of readers of books, much lower than the teen-agers and even lower than persons over sixty-five. We should therefore take a moment to look more closely at this group of young nonreaders, because it represents a sharp loss from the fold at the very beginning of adult life and a heavy loss from the portion of the adult population that has the highest educational level.

TABLE 16

READING AND GREATEST SOURCE OF WORRY

Source of Worry	Per cent of Readers	Per cent of Nonreaders
Money	13.8	17.8
Health	12.4	17.7
War	15.6	11.1
Children	14.1	11.7
Job security	1.8	2.0
Communism – civil liberties	1.2	1.1
Other	21.6	15.0
Don't know; no opinion	19.5	23.6

When he is fifteen, the young person is a member of the largest age group of book readers; when he is twenty-five, he is a member of the smallest group of book readers. Three-fourths of out-of-school young adults do not read a book in the course of a year, almost twice as many nonbook readers as in the twenty-five to forty age group. This occurs despite the fact that on the average the educational level of persons in the population age thirty-five to forty is somewhat lower than the educational level of those in their twenties. Even the high school graduate and the college graduate participate in this descernible falling off of book reading after leaving school.

The substantial drop in book reading of adults during their twenties deserves additional attention because it is at this stage that many adult nonreaders appear. The school has brought them into and kept them for a time in the fold, but now they slip away. Some return to book reading by their thirties, but a considerable number do not. If we could get some idea of the factors which turn young adults away from reading, we would have some insight into possible steps for promoting reading among adults.

The evidence in the Deiches Studies indicates certain of the factors at work, and others appear logical even though direct evidence on them was not obtained. The young person leaving school, whether high school or college, shifts out of an environment in which book reading is imposed as a condition for acceptance and success. In school he has to read books, but this does not often apply in adult life. Evidently many young people turn from book reading as an enforced task for which they have no inclination on their own volition. The courses are over, the diploma or degree is earned, and one does not have to read books any more than he has to write term papers. To the extent that this occurs, it of course means that the schools and colleges have not instilled a sense of reading as a continuing tool for living.

In addition, for most young people the years immediately after high school or college represent a very sharp change in living habits, involving a job and the beginning of a career, marriage, and the establishment of a

TABLE 17

ADULT BOOK READING AND TIME OF FIRST USE OF PUBLIC LIBRARY

Library Contact	Per cent of Group Who Now Read Books
First contact before school age	74.6
While in elementary school	55.6
While in secondary school	49.2
In adult life	45.2
Have never used a public library	17.8

TABLE 18

ADULT BOOK READING AND BOOKS OWNED

Number of Books	Per cent of Book Readers	Per cent of Nonreaders
Own few if any books	10.7	68.8
Up to 100 books	43.3	26.7
100 or more books	46.0	4.5

new home. It is a time for doing rather than for reading. One might argue that this should not be the case, that young adults face many information needs for which books would serve and of course have the new responsibilities of a citizen and a homemaker, but the young married couple usually does not analyze its reading needs in this way. Later, when the job is somewhat established, when the marriage pattern has been worked out, when the home is stabilized, then adults in their thirties do turn more to book reading. In fact, young married couples may represent one of the less participating groups in our society, in the sense that they are turned away not only from schools and libraries but also from other institutions. Their primary attention and energy are given to the home. It is only later that they move back more into the community, into civic affairs, into the stream of cultural life, and thus may begin again to use book reading.

It is clear that marriage is a factor related to a reduction in book reading. Sixty-eight per cent of single women have read a book within a year, but only 43 per cent of married women. The differential holds even among college graduates, in that 84 per cent read books if single, but only 65 per cent if married.

This change is not fully accounted for by the added or new duties imposed on the woman by marriage. If this were solely a matter of amount of time, one would expect less book reading on the part of individuals with children than those without. In part this is true, in that 72 per cent of married women who have completed high school or college, but are without children, read books, but only 62 per cent with children. On the other hand, of wives not completing high school, more read books if they have children than if they do not, 28 per cent as compared with 22 per cent. Factors other than children would seem to be the key, and possibly factors other than the pure work load on the married woman. It is also notable that widows, for whom circumstances have removed the duties of maintaining a home for a family, actually read books less than married women with children.

One of the probable factors is that the creation of a home absorbs the time and energy of the young adult and to a degree makes him a nonparticipant in the larger society around him. We have already noted the very considerable importance of stimulus in promoting book reading. Where contacts are primarily in the home, less stimulus for reading occurs, a relationship which holds also for older adults whose interests do not extend beyond the home.

Another factor is that the marriage partner may not be a book reader. While it is true that more highly educated women are more likely to marry educated men, who in turn are more likely to be book readers, the Deiches Studies in Baltimore show a considerable number of marriages in which only one partner has been a book reader. To put it delicately, book reading is evidently not a major factor in the attraction between the sexes. At the time of marriage a certain number of individuals, men or women, who came from reading homes and who themselves have been book readers, proceed to shift to a home in which one party is not a reader, and this appears to have an effect in a substantial number of cases on the reading habits of the other.

One could generalize by saying that the period after the young adult leaves school, and while he becomes established in his vocation and in family life, is a period when he is drawn away from book reading and only in some cases does he later return to this source. His spouse may not be a reader, and his associations during this period do not push him in the direction of reading. If these conditions continue to hold, in the sense that the new home is not a reading place and that associations are not established with civic and cultural activities which stimulate reading, a person who was once a reader or at least a potential reader ceases to be so.

It would be a mistake to assume that generalizations for book reading necessarily apply for all reading on the part of young adults. The curve for magazine reading does not show the same drop as that for book reading. On the contrary, magazine reading increases soon after school is completed, mounts rapidly during the twenties whether an individual is married or not, continues at a relatively high level for the middle adult years, and then falls off somewhat in the upper years. Thus many of the young adults do not necessarily abandon reading but do turn away from books.

It is clear that the early years of adulthood constitute an important turning point in the development of lifelong readers. These years also present one of the most difficult stages to act upon because there are few "handles" in the life of the individual that can be grasped to pull him into the reading fold. While library programs should be mounted for the early adult years, there is a warning here to make every effort to meet the problem earlier in the years of childhood.

Stages in the Development of Readers

From the preceding account of reading and readers, we can extract several strategic stages in the development of reading behavior as the individual matures. The young adult years are one such stage, and we have already examined this period because so many potential readers are lost at that point. There are other critical points which together offer various "handles" on the problem of reading by the poor and underprivileged.

These are junction points, crossroads of choice, where more persons than usual may take up or drop free subject reading, whether in books or magazines. If effective contact could be made with persons of low cultural background at one or more of these points, if in effect they could get special guidance at these crossroads, some progress might be achieved in making and holding readers. A library program for the disadvantaged can gain clarity and focus by aiming at one or more of these strategic stages of reading development.

It is only realistic to remember that these are at best no more than vulnerable points in the vicious circle of influences pushing some people away from reading. Expressed negatively, these are opportunities to which the individual may fail to respond, and each failure makes it that much less likely that he will react favorably at the next stage. Immediate and spectacular results should not be expected. On the contrary, it would be best to use an experimental approach, on a limited scope but in some genuine depth at each of these points, and then to ascertain whether any discernible result is achieved and to identify the stages in reading development that are most amenable to library efforts.

1. Preschool period, ages three and four

The youngster at this stage is learning to communicate by means of words, although not yet in written or printed form. He is developing skill in listening and in speaking. He learns the names of common objects and basic concepts, such as size, distance, color. And he usually responds to a series of words as a story. Pictures on a page begin to have meaning for him, and thus he starts to use the printed page. The "school" in which most children have this experience is actually the home and the immediate neighborhood, and the "teachers" are his parents, brothers and sisters, and playmates. The disadvantaged child is disadvantaged precisely because he does not have the experience. The small child who does not have these opportunities either at home or in the community will have difficulty entering the next stage, when reading should become the new and key means for his continuing education. Programs for this early age must break new ground, differing from customary methods of both schools and libraries, and should rest upon knowledge of the psychology of early childhood development. They will be more promising if parents can be involved with their children.

2. Basic reading period, ages eight to ten

The school seeks to train the youngster in beginning skills in reading and writing. The responses of children differ. Some master the skill easily and the road is open before them. When reading capability does not develop, a lifelong problem has started. Yet most children still have curiosity at this age and examine the world around them by whatever means they can command. If there is even the barest of reading skill and if this can be drawn on in an uncoerced situation with reading related to the child's curiosity, some progress may be achieved. Teachers seek to help the slow reader, but must do so in the setting of the classroom, against which some of the nonreaders are rebelling, and must seek to do so while still giving attention to other members of a class. Some schools have remedial reading programs and special instructors. In either case there is the opportunity to join the disciplined efforts of the school with the more permissive approach of the library. For those children who do develop reading skill, exercise of the skill is important, to the point where reading becomes as natural as talking. If the child does not get through this period successfully, the road ahead is probably closed, so that the prize is worth great effort.

3. The exploration period, ages twelve to fourteen

This crossroads is listed not because many readers are made here but because some evidently are lost, at least in the Baltimore families interviewed in the Deiches Studies. Most young persons are able to read at this stage and do so for their school work. But at this age some discontinue all reading unless specifically assigned. As natural curiosity dulls, spontaneous reading may decline. There appears to be a special difficulty at this age in finding reading material of interest to the early teen-ager. Others are still inclined to do free reading during the junior high years (even though they may drop such reading under pressure of formal study in the last few years of senior high) and those who read in the twelve to fourteen period are almost twice as likely to pick up reading for their own interests later in life. Free reading at the junior high period begins to show a wide range of topics and individuality, suggesting that it is done in response to personal and somewhat special interests. This calls for a collection of some scope, which is often lacking in the limited junior high libraries in Baltimore, and it calls for some guidance among the many titles of a large collection lest the young person turn away in confusion. Some young readers wander from the fold as they shift from the confines of the juvenile collection to the considerable range of literature in a large branch or in Pratt Central. Pratt offers a Young Adult service for this purpose, but the Deiches findings indicate that this reaches only a small portion of the teen-age group in disadvantaged neighborhoods. There is need for added effort at this stage to hold those developing readers who have come this far along the road.

4. Early adulthood — the twenties

As has been indicated, this is a low point, at least in book reading, and not only for nonreaders but also for those who read when they were younger and who may return to it when they are older. Most individuals are not strongly motivated to read at this stage, and there may be no point in trying to encourage them to do so. They feel that they have graduated from required school reading and are now ready to live rather than preparing for living through reading. For them early married life is often a confining period, when the young mother in particular is cut off from both community and intellectual influences. Yet it is a period when new worlds are being entered, with new information needed and new concepts encountered. It is also a period when lifelong personal interests, whether stimulated by earlier formal study or developed in the course of exploring adult life, begin to take form. It is quite possible that truly useful material, brought to the attention of young people entering their careers and of young married couples, would serve dramatically to high light the personal as distinct from the school value of reading and thus increase the chance that reading will become an adult habit. Work with the young mother might well be combined with preschool reading experience for her small children, with one reinforcing the other.

5. The early middle years — the thirties

If a person is coming back to regular reading, he will probably do so in this period. If he does not, he is likely to remain a nonbook-reader the rest of his life. The family is established, the career is started, the community of residence is selected–yet ambitions remain and life interests are deepening. The job may call for information. Community interests may stimulate reading. Background is sought in home and hobby possibilities. Individual subject interests, from art to Zen, appear or are revived from school years. Time begins to be available for reading. Books and more books should somehow be brought to the attention of people in their thirties. The Deiches data do not show very many people taking up reading for the first time in their lives at this stage if they did not read when younger, but they do show many who return to reading after falling away just after leaving school or college. Every effort should be made to clear the way for the return of the prodigal son. And there is a small group which takes up book reading for the first time at this stage, particularly married women, and intensified effort may well increase the response.

6. The senior years

There evidently is something of a second chance for at least a few individuals to come back to reading, in addition to the opportunities in the middle years. This number is not large, although it may be expected to increase as the bulge of better-educated people reaches to the upper years, and possibly also as people retire earlier, although the number of early retirees in the Deiches sample was not sufficient to establish this. It would be unrealistic to think that much inroad can be made at this late point unless individuals have considerable education. Even then other conditions are necessary, such as continued mental alertness and adequate sight. When older people do turn to reading, it evidently comes to occupy a particularly important place in their lives and the quantity of material consumed by such individuals is considerably above average. There are examples in the Deiches data showing that the public library visit is a high light in the activities of the older individual or couple.

These several stages or crossroads can be identified rather clearly from the data. However, the reasons why people turn toward or away from reading at these points in their lives are much less clear and should have further study. As special efforts are made to place selected reading materials before people at the several stages, from the youngster with his picture book to the senior citizen who seeks to live in books, new insight will be gained into the role of reading in maturation. On a purely functional level, the half-dozen strategic stages provide openings for intensified library service for people of limited background.

VI. A PRATT LIBRARY PROGRAM FOR THE DISADVANTAGED

We come finally to the question of what Pratt can and should do for Baltimore residents of limited educational and cultural background. The Deiches data contain ample evidence confirming the fact that many of these people do not turn readily to books and libraries. A first question that must be faced is whether Pratt or any other public library has an obligation to seek to reach those who do not naturally use it and whether it has any chance of success if it does make the effort.

Why a Special Program for the Disadvantaged?

Realistic arguments can be marshalled in support of aiming library service at the present minority of readers and against a diffusion of time and resources on nonreaders. We have seen that reading depends on education. One might say that the library is an agency established to carry on after formal education takes hold; it is not a viable institution unless there is a reading public to use it. For those underprivileged adults with limited education who break the chains of their background and do become readers, the library doors are always open. Pratt has sought in branches in the inner city to provide material suited to those just reaching out to reading as a means of self-development. What more can or should a library do except to ease the path for those who choose to make the journey?

In substance the Public Library Inquiry eighteen years ago reached this conclusion, or at least one of the influential volumes of that study presented the view that the public library program should in fact be built expressly to serve the more educated.[21] The library profession has not officially adopted this position, which in almost any conceivable formulation would label it as an institution for the elite. But we have seen that this in practice has been the policy followed by public libraries, including Pratt. The bulk of its effort today goes to those who are educated in the formal sense and to those actively engaged in acquiring formal education and only a marginal part of its effort to the culturally deprived. And as observed before in this report, the agency has been hard put even to serve those who seek it out, much less to have time and money to reach out to those who do not use it.

Further, it must be noted that time is on the side of the policy of serving educated readers. There will inevitably be more of them as the years go by. The Deiches data permit the establishment of an index of probable public library use, based on the percentage of people at different educational levels now using the library. This is applied in Table 19, first to the present library public with an average adult educational level for adults in Baltimore of 8.9 years, and then to a potential adult public with 12.0 years of average education—and adult use would increase over 50 per cent! In round figures, with an average educational level of adults at the ninth grade, a public library as strong as Pratt can expect to have about 18 per cent of the out-of-school adults as users (that is, using the library at least once a year); with the average at the twelfth grade level, the figure becomes 29 per cent. It stands to reason that it is easier for a reading institution to serve persons who make more frequent use of reading, just as it is easier for an airline to serve the route of most frequent travel. One interpretation is that the public library has merely to sit and wait and its role will be substantially enhanced.

Pratt or any other library would make a mistake if it were in any way to weaken or sacrifice present service to users in order to beat the bushes for nonusers. An institution should do what it can, and should not be tempted by purposes, no matter how worthy, which it does not have the capacity to attain. It would be idle dreaming to assume that the public library can transform thousands of persons who have lost hope.

On the other hand, it is more than dreaming, and indeed a responsibility, to be sure that full opportunity is kept open for the person born and brought up in a setting that stifles his potentialities. Recorded knowledge is a heritage for all, not just for those wellborn or those who took a degree.

The arguments for not waiting, for reaching out to the disadvantaged, must be faced. In considering these it is of course understood that this is not a matter of alternatives, whether to serve the privileged or the underprivileged. It is more a question of whether a new "outreach" should be developed to attract potential readers from among the disadvantaged, while continuing to serve the present elite. Should a new dimension be added to the public library program?

One consideration is the sheer numbers of the underprivileged in the city, and the number may well go up before it turns down. The Baltimore human renewal "action area" contains 220,000 people, and this by

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[21] Bernard Berelson, *The Library's Public* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), pp. 129-31.

TABLE 19

PRESENT AND POTENTIAL PRATT LIBRARY ADULT USERS BY EDUCATIONAL LEVELS*

Educational Level	Library Use Index**	Present (Educational Level 8.9)		Potential (Educational Level 12.0)	
		Population	Library Users***	Population	Library Users***
Not elementary school graduates	.03	185,000	5,550	100,000	3,000
Elementary graduates but not high school graduates	.13	203,000	26,370	125,000	16,250
High school graduates but not college graduates	.38	121,000	46,000	255,000	97,000
College graduates	.68	31,000	21,000	60,000	41,000
Total adult		540,000	98,920	540,000	157,250
Per cent of total			18.3%		29.1%

*Assuming total adult population were the same when educational level becomes 12.0.

**Index derived from percentage of sample interviewed using the library. Round numbers used because based on sample. The index numbers simply mean that 3 per cent of the lowest educational group use the library, 13 per cent of the next group, and so on.

***Library users — persons using Pratt one or more times during the past year.

definition is not the total disadvantaged group. There are no less than 390,000 *adults* in the city of Baltimore who are not high school graduates, 72 per cent of all persons twenty-five or over. Putting aside children and young people in school or college, we are considering here a distinct majority of Baltimore residents. The adult with limited education and low income has become the rule rather than the exception in this city.

As indicated above, the educational level is going up, and in time the adult population will be better educated. However, in a city such as Baltimore the change will not be rapid. It is not possible to put an exact date on the "potential" set down in Table 19 for the time when the average education of adults in the city will increase from nine to twelve years. Some suburban communities have already passed this mark. But Baltimore has its thousands–in fact, hundreds of thousands–of persons who did not complete minimum schooling. It is attracting more such individuals and is not even carrying all its present young people through high school. The twelve-year average will not be achieved before the 1980 census, and then only if the suburban exodus of the better educated slows down and some suburban people return. If these reversals do not occur, the city could become the permanent depository of society's uneducated minority.

In any case, a sizable portion of Baltimore people will be disadvantaged for at least a generation, and Pratt has no alternative except to decide whether it will or will not step up its efforts to reach this large mass. If it should decide not to reach out, and thus in substance serve only the reading elite, it will find itself within a decade used primarily by students and suburbanites. These two groups now comprise over 70 per cent of the patronage, and the figure will increase as the inner city spreads, unless the base of library use is broadened. Certainly Baltimore as a whole cannot put off the problem for a few decades, even if the Library should in effect do so, because the disadvantaged are with us here and now.

Another line of argument for special effort in reaching out to the disadvantaged focuses more on children than on adults. There is a tug of war going on in the inner city, with the school pulling the child one way and the home and neighborhood often pushing him the other. Other community agencies, and particularly the Library, should be in the battle on the side of the schools, if for no other reason than to hold on to their potential clientele. The future hope for the city library, when we become a better educated society, will not be realized if the school dropout rate remains high or if many young people manage to get through high school but do not become readers. All this calls for special effort with the slum child, who is not yet out of reach. And it also calls for work with his parents, the mother particularly, to enlist workers from within in the renewal program or at the least to neutralize contrary forces. Unless an effort is made to reach the disadvantaged child, who is a potential reader even if his parents are not, many who might have joined the reading ranks will be lost, and the city library will be one of the last to realize the benefits of a broader base of social use of public institutions which will characterize a better-educated people.

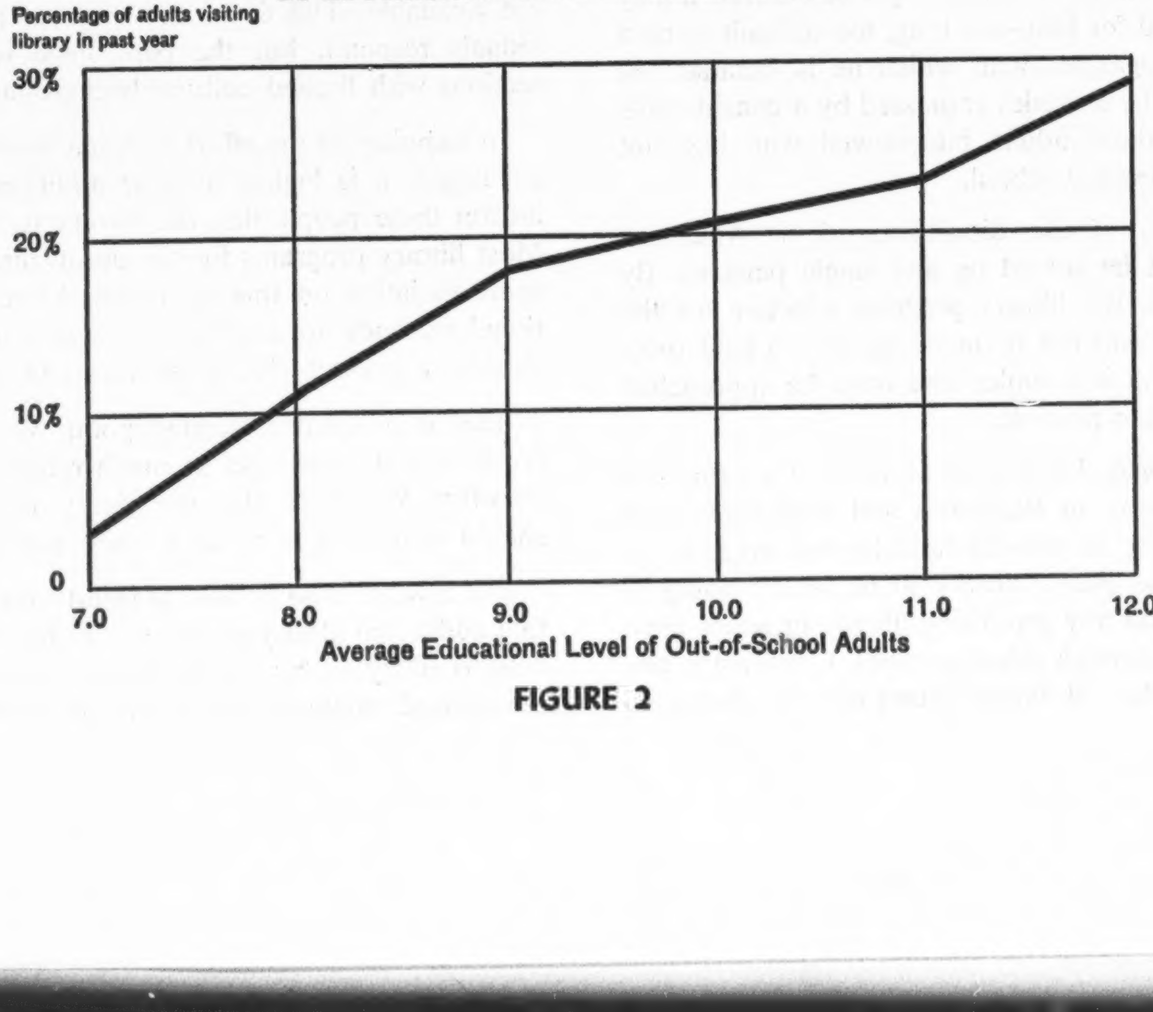
At bottom the decision to reach out or not to reach out to the culturally deprived is a matter of social value more than a matter of efficiency or logic. As a society we are concerned about the underprivileged. We have a feeling of guilt about the dispossessed in our midst; they stand as evidence of weakness in the way of life in which we believe. Both privately and by means of government we seek to help them. Currently community and educational agencies are being marshalled in a concerted attack on this weakness. If the library were not to join the effort, it would be one of the few community agencies that chooses to stand aside while others mount the attack.

There can be no assurance of total victory. No doubt some people will not respond to any program. But the evidence presented on reading in this report gives some grounds for realistic hope. It is clear that statistically a larger number of people will make greater use of books as the educational level rises. More than that, there runs through the data some evidence that a percentage of the disadvantaged respond to reading. Thus, over half the adults who lack a high school diploma regularly read a magazine of the *Life-Post-Time-Reader's Digest* variety. Despite our assertion that the public library is essentially an institution for the educated, 32,000 Baltimore adults who never completed high school use Pratt with some regularity. It is specially interesting to note that limited home background can be counterbalanced by education, and when organizational participation is added, a discernible number of people join the ranks of readers no matter what their cultural origin. It would be pure sentiment to picture this as a mass movement involving the bulk of the disadvantaged, but equally it would be pure cynicism to discount the significant minority who do respond.

The function of an agency of education is to keep the door of opportunity open, and indeed beyond that to point the way to the door and to help those who want to pass through it. The hard fact that many do not respond does not vitiate the program, whether in schools or libraries. But we must be sure that all have full opportunity to respond.

The public library is not without assets as an agency for the disadvantaged. It is already installed within communities, where people live. It is open to all. The library does not ask the user for prior education, has no fees, prescribes no examinations, awards no certificates. Come as you are, pick your own topic, pursue it as long as you want. The "curriculum" is as wide as the range of recorded knowledge. While there are no lessons or class periods as such, there are professionals ready to provide guidance, a service which experience at the Pennsylvania Avenue Branch indicates is appreciated by the reader with limited background. This is individualized education par excellence.

To the extent that a program of human renewal



OUT-OF-SCHOOL ADULT USE OF PRATT LIBRARY
BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF NEIGHBORHOODS

FIGURE 2

depends on self-help on the part of the individual, as well as on outside help from welfare agencies, the public library has a role to play. Indeed, for all who have or can be given minimum functional literacy, the public library might well provide the *continuing and ongoing element*. Existing or new agencies can guide and stimulate the underprivileged person individually, get him started, after which, at least for some, reading in the library may be his continuation school. Rehabilitation seldom occurs as the result of one or a few incidents, nor is education achieved in a spurt of study. It is the long pull and not the winter's program that will begin to change the inner city. It is self-motivation and not outside stimulus that will bring permanent results. The library is there now and will be there through the years. It is a means for self-improvement, not in any one mold but in a multitude of patterns according to individual inclination.

It is precisely at the age level that presents the most hopeful prospect, the childhood years, that the Pratt Library has relevant experience and impressive resources. Any realistic library program for the disadvantaged will stress the opportunity with children.

And there are the liabilities. The public library to some people is a remote place for formal students and learned individuals. The less education an adult has, the more he thinks the library is for "others." He does not identify his everyday mundane questions with what he considers to be a prestige institution, nor are his interests strong enough to carry him the considerable distance to the library. If he overcomes his reluctance and goes to the library, he is less likely than his more educated neighbors to find what he wants. He does not *know how to use the library, and he hesitates to ask.* Even if he finds material on his topic of interest, it may well be unsuited for him—too long, too difficult to read—unlike the magazines with which he is familiar. At least these are the attitudes expressed by a considerable group among those adults interviewed who had not completed elementary school.

The problem of the disadvantaged in American society will not be solved by any single panacea. By the same token, the library program effective for the underprivileged will not be made up of one neat project. The problem is complex and must be approached in as many ways as possible.

Those who plan the over-all strategy of a campaign of human renewal, in Baltimore and elsewhere, must therefore be sure to remain flexible and open to all possibilities. The public library alone is not going to turn the tide, and any promising library program must work with and through other agencies. Conversely, this does not mean that all library efforts must be channeled through some central unit or that all library contact with readers in the inner city must be through some designated agency. A public library that fails to work with other community agencies is engaging in irresponsible isolationism. On the other hand, no library should hesitate to act on its own where it has capacity to make a contribution, and no city should stand in the way of an established institution making its own full contribution.

Each agency must take stock, set goals, make plans—but beware of the elaborately-structured cultural program as of the centrally-planned economic program. Both may look good on paper but are likely to lack human initiative and institutional flexibility. Multiplicity must be the keynote lest needed effort be choked off. Yet coordination must be the watchword lest efforts cancel out each other and fail to build toward the common goal.

The broad aspects from which the Pratt program for the underprivileged must be devised are at least three in number:

Encouraging culturally deprived persons to come to existing library agencies;

Bringing the library out to the people;

Working with and through other agencies and organizations in contact with the disadvantaged.

Encouraging People to Come to the Library

In a sense this is the prevailing program for service to the disadvantaged, in Baltimore as elsewhere. Branches built in the past exist in the slum areas. Publicity is issued to inform people that these facilities are available. The doors are open to all. Some individuals respond, but the percentage is small in the sections with limited cultural background.

In stepping up the effort to reach more of the underprivileged, it is logical to issue additional publicity to inform these people that the library is there for them. Most library programs for the disadvantaged constitute some variation on this approach. More or less traditional methods are used and they seek to attract individuals to present library facilities and services.

This is a sensible starting point. We have existing facilities and should get as much return from them as possible. We have the machinery of publicity and should step it up to reach a wider segment of society.

But it would also be wise to stand back and recognize that additional library publicity, through the usual channels, is likely to have only limited impact on the disadvantaged nonuser. When we go through the usual procedure of informing a potential user of the library, several conditions must hold if there is to be a response:

> The individual must have an interest in recorded knowledge and seek to improve his life by consulting what others have set down in print.
>
> He must already use what the library has to offer—books for the most part—or at least be willing to try them.
>
> The information about the library must reach him—the message of its existence and services must get through.
>
> The individual must relate this message to himself so that he concludes that the library probably has something for him.
>
> The individual must also anticipate that he will be welcome at the library, comfortable there, and able to locate what he wants.
>
> There must be an outlet of the library within convenient reach, even if he does not have the use of an automobile.
>
> And when he gets there, the agency must have the material he wants, in a form and at a level he can understand.

This is a long and treacherous course for the person of limited cultural experience. Small wonder that only a few successfully complete it.

Publicity as such cannot change or create the last two elements in this sequence. If suitable materials for the culturally disadvantaged person are not in the branch, there is little point in urging him to go and use it. Similarly, if branches are located in out-of-the-way places—which can happen with older units in slum areas that have changed over the years—we can hardly expect the person of limited education to make a greater effort to get to a library than is expected of the high school or college graduate living farther out.

At the other end of the sequence, publicity about the library cannot be expected by some miracle to give hope and purpose to people who feel that the good life has passed them by. Nor can it make book users of many who have not turned to them when they are already more conveniently available in the corner drugstore and other locations. It can be argued that the corner drugstore does not have the books the underprivileged want, but this in itself is not proof that the library does have the desired materials. And if very many people wanted low-cost cookbooks or manuals on repairing automobiles or even pamphlets on how to stay out of jail, the newsstand or drugstore would probably get them. The Deiches findings show, for example, that one of the sources for reading for people who are often considered nonreaders is the church, which distributes pamphlets on religious and ethical questions.

All this is not intended to build a case against intensified distribution of information about the library to people who simply have not considered what it has to offer. But we will better realize the possibilities and the limitations of publicity alone if we remember that it will not automatically change people on the one side or alter the library on the other.

Skillful publicity can seek to bring the word to people who have wondered where to get information and background. It can try to correct the preconceptions of many adults of limited education that the library is for children in school and for educated adults. Effective publicity always has an element of motivation about it—not just information but also an indication of why the information is important—so that it can bring to focus half-formed interests and lead to a first effort to do something about them.

The very media used for library publicity may be ill-suited to reaching the poor. The largest source in which people noted publicity about Pratt Library was the newspapers—57 per cent recalling a library message in this medium, as against 27 per cent on radio and 13 per cent on television. The portion of the population reached by newspapers is markedly smaller among adults who are not elementary school graduates, for several reasons. Almost one-fifth of this group does not read a newspaper, most of whom represent the genuine nonreaders in our country. Those who do follow newspapers tend more toward Baltimore publications that carry less library news. Further, most people select some items in newspapers and pass over others; the nonbook reader is simply not interested in items about the institution of books any more than he is interested in news about other institutions of the culture that he does not possess. On the other hand, one-third of the newspaper readers who did not complete elementary school recall reading about the Library in that source.

TABLE 20

NEWSPAPER READERSHIP AND THE LIBRARY MESSAGE

	Per cent of High School and College Graduates	Per cent Not Elementary School Graduates
Read newspapers regularly	97.6	80.4
Recall reading about Pratt Library	68.5	27.0

Even those among the less educated who do read about libraries in newspapers will in some cases feel no affinity with the agency as a result of what they read. Pratt Library properly engages in a variety of cultural events–lectures, educational films, book and author luncheons, literary awards. These are natural subjects for news releases. Together they can confirm what the disadvantaged person half suspects: that the library is a center of another world of which he is not a part. Even if he does not feel shut out, these are not activities in which he yearns to participate. This is not criticism of Pratt publicity. One does not take an institution of culture and somehow project an image similar to that of the corner bar. But the psychological distance between the slum dweller and the public library must be recognized if publicity for him is to be realistic.

In particular the newspaper and other usual channels of general publicity are not a well-calculated means for making contact with the most promising age group in the slums–the children. Obviously the youngsters themselves will not get the message directly. Their parents are not likely to pass it on to them. Other means of communication must be developed if the children are to be given their chance to benefit from reading and the library. It must be remembered that the disadvantaged family is not just one with a low paycheck; it is culturally isolated and suspicious of the middle-class world.

The established and able Pratt Library Public Relations Division should experiment with new methods and channels for carrying the library message to the disadvantaged. The newspapers–particularly *The News American* and *The Afro-American*–are possibilities. But the news or events reported must be those that the person of limited education will read, and when reading identify with himself. The news column is not necessarily the only or best form within the newspaper. The visual impression, photos of ordinary people engaged in everyday activities in the library, should be stressed. A photo contest or series might be promoted to show newspaper readers in dramatic, personal form that the agency is for people like themselves. Comic cartoons about reading and library use might be gathered and redrawn to picture the common people rather than the elite. Cartoon strips could be developed showing the value of books and libraries and dealing with practical questions in which the underprivileged would be interested–living conditions, low-cost products, health, job opportunities, family problems, everyday legal matters and rights.

The Deiches interviews indicate that two agencies stand out as points of contact for low-income adults, the church and the fraternal organization. The local minister of the small church is held in special regard. The labor union was not mentioned frequently as a source for general information and advice. The corner bar was brought in by some individuals as a place where they acquire useful information, as was the small local grocery store (not the supermarket, which is seldom found in the inner city, but the general store where many people buy on credit). And a small number mentioned a welfare agency or worker as a source to which they turn.

It is proposed that Pratt Library put together a folder for distribution to people in the inner city through churches, fraternal organizations, and neighborhood centers. It could also be slipped into the grocery package at the local store and handed out by the worker in the welfare agency. The audience aimed at must be kept rigorously in mind: the adult who did not complete high school and who is in the lowest part of the economic scale. The content must be brief, direct, and eminently readable. It should mention practical problems faced by low-income families and the forms of recreation in which they are interested. It should explicitly state that anyone may use the resources in the library–no questions to answer, no identification to produce, no documents to sign. The minimum qualifications for borrowing books should be set down and the nearest branch identified and clearly located. And if possible all this in a small folder that can be produced at very low cost in large quantity.

Library publicity must break out of its customary mold and use new and very popular content and channels if it is to broaden its social base. It should take on new forms–the personal as distinct from the media approach (see "Community Field Librarian," p. 51), the interagency approach (see p. 47 for proposed kits for welfare workers), and even devices and gimmicks (see book give-away program, p. 46). And it is likely to be expensive as new social territories are explored.

Program for Children and Young People

The Deiches data have shown repeatedly that the most promising opportunity for a reading program aimed at the poor and disadvantaged is with younger children. It is also with children that over the years the most intensive and personal library service has developed. The special library capacity and experience in children's work should be focused on this vulnerable point.

It is proposed that Pratt give high priority to a reading project aimed at youngsters over a three-year span, ages four through six, one year before kindergarten through the first grade. The project should be organized in selected branches in the inner city.

The Baltimore Board of Education is currently expanding its preschool program as "Operation Head Start," and library activities should be coordinated with this significant development. Where the schools build preschool classes, book provision, story hours, and similar activities should properly be furnished by Pratt as part of the school activity. But it is doubtful whether the Board of Education will have the means to reach all slum neighborhoods, and in some cases branch libraries are located in gaps between schools. If the formal education authority does reach all of the inner city with preschool classes, a public library program should be considered for the area just beyond the slums, where people may have somewhat more income but are still handicapped by limited educational and cultural background.

Rather than jumping into the whole three-year span at once, inevitably with limited personnel and experience, it would be better for Pratt to start with four-year-olds alone, in a few neighborhoods, moving up with the same groups for several years, filling in behind each year with other starting groups at the four-year level. At the end of a few years it should be possible to compare the reading performance of the library groups with that of youngsters from similar backgrounds but not in the program. Insight and skill now being gained in the neighborhood centers of the Community Action Program would be applied to this wider endeavor.

The initial year, for preschool youngsters, should receive particular attention. This might well involve two periods at the branch library per week, of one hour each. The primary methods used would be the story hour and group reading from picture books, with occasional use of films. The formal part of each session should occupy no more than thirty minutes. In the remaining time youngsters would examine books on their own and play with toys and objects related if possible to the stories and books which were presented. A children's librarian would spend a few minutes with each child individually, seeking to identify the particular interest and book that give promise of holding his attention.

Beginning with the year when the child is five and enters school, the library meetings would occur once a week, probably on Saturdays. Library aides would help to handle the concentrated load at this period. Every effort should be made to relate the sessions with what the children are doing in school, yet preserving the non-coercive atmosphere of the community library.

For the six-year-olds the program would culminate in a "reading summer." The purpose would be to fix and accelerate the reading habit prior to return to formal study in the autumn. This final summer, with effort concentrated on the six-year-old "graduates," should call out special effort, with teachers hired to work with librarians. The final push would come at the time when the child has completed the first grade. His library experience would of course not end here but would continue in the regular children's program of Pratt branches.

An area within the branches used should be set up for the sessions with the four- to six-year-old children. No special furniture is needed–if there is clear and clean floor space. But picture books and beginning readers and suitable materials of every kind must be available in abundance. The supply must be sufficient to enable each child to take books home with him.

In most cases mothers or other guardians would accompany children to the branch. To reach youngsters who do not have a parent prepared to get them to the library, volunteer adults should be organized to transport children from a little distance. And the story hour–book sessions should be carried out to day-care centers where children are left by working parents.

For the mothers at the library sessions, a brief period would be organized during storytime for introducing them to readable material for parents, homemakers, and consumers–and for showing them how they can read at home with their own families. If parents can be brought to enter the world of books at the same time as the children, the prospect for a satisfying reading experience will be brighter. This aspect of the program might well be developed into a simple "curriculum" or instructional activity in reading for parents which would also be of value to parent groups meeting in connection with school classes.

At the same time, prudence must be exercised to avoid an elaborate program either for children or mothers. While some families may respond to concentrated and structured periods of study, the interested group would be limited. Further, the more elaborate the plan, the more staff it requires and the fewer the number of people who can be reached. We are seeking here a viable project that can be continued and expanded, not an exhausting program that may appear impressive for a time and then fade away.

Even in a simple plan, depending essentially on stories, pictures, books, and reading, staff demands will be heavy. Skilled children's librarians are hard enough to find at any time, and particularly for work with slum children. One children's librarian detached from other duties could probably handle eight to ten sessions per week, thus reaching 150-200 children. Even this load will require special assistance to help control a score of young children. For mothers who come with young infants, baby-sitting facilities will be needed. To meet these needs a "reading corps" should be developed, primarily composed of volunteers from the poverty areas or from among the members of women's civic groups in Baltimore who would give several hours per week. An effort should then be made to identify a few select individuals among the reading volunteers who can be trained in story hour and related presentations for young children. A small number who show a real bent for reading work with young children and who complete prescribed training might be placed on salary as an auxiliary arm of the children's reading program. They would not be children's librarians—their work would be organized and directed by professionals—but those aides would extend the influence of the limited number of fully qualified librarians. Thus a sound plan could grow, depending both on professionals and on trained auxiliaries and drawing personnel from among the disadvantaged themselves.

This concentrated program for young children has been proposed because all indications show that more return can be realistically anticipated at this early age than at any later stage. But youngsters in the middle grades also present an opportunity. The evidence shows that some acquire acceptable skill in reading but never become readers in any genuine sense because they do not readily gain access to suitable material.

As a sequel to the four to six program it is proposed that Pratt branches in the inner city particularly stress summer reading activity for the seven to nine group. Intensive contact should be made in June of each year with the second, third, and fourth grades in the schools. Slum youngsters at these levels are not going off for vacations for the summer. They will be on the streets, and these are especially important years in forming attitudes and values. They still have potential for good as well as evil. The older gang, the drab street, the indifferent parent push them one way. Who pulls them the other? Who helps the slum youngster who can read —but has nothing to read? Not his parents, not the corner store, not even the branch library if it is a distance away in a section which he does not know and if he is uncertain whether he will be welcome.

We should not hesitate to try unusual inducements. What would happen if each fourth-grade youngster in a few inner-city schools were to be presented on his last day in school in June with a paperbound children's book, no strings attached? On the book would be a clear indication that it belonged to Pratt Library and that if he brought it to the nearby branch during the summer, along with a signed registration card (also in the paperbook), he could exchange it for two or more regular books. Perhaps of five thousand soft-cover books, costing a total of $2,000, only a few hundred would come back. But there would be a few hundred slum children attached to them. And the number might be considerably higher. It doesn't take too much native intelligence on the part of the child to recognize that you come out at the long end of the deal if you bring in one paperbook and go out with two hard-cover books of your choice.

The skill of the children's librarian is pre-eminently needed in any reading program for culturally disadvantaged children. The climb up the reading ladder is precarious for these youngsters, and they need help all along the way. All the librarian's knowledge of books is required, coupled with understanding of reading. Even these traditional attributes will not suffice without the plus factor of tolerance and sympathy for children with serious gaps in background and undisciplined attitudes and habits.

Moving up the age scale a bit, we know that the twelve to fourteen period is a crossroads in reading for many young people. As reported earlier, the Deiches data show that early teen-agers in the slums are reached hardly at all by the Young Adult service of Pratt. These are years when the young person passes from the confines of children's literature, selected especially for the younger child, to the vast range of adult books in which he is readily lost. The books the young person comes on in the library or in other sources appear too hard, or are on specialized topics, or at least are not within his interest. He naturally falls back from this vast world of books as from a forest through which he cannot find his way. Yet the data indicate that those who do find their way in these junior years are much more likely to remain readers for life.

Pratt has young adult librarians with understanding of young people, wide knowledge of literature, and a sense of the adventure of free reading. It is proposed that two or three be assigned, for an experimental period, to work on a special program in the inner city. The project proposed earlier for young children stressed bringing them to the branch library. But in this case the experimental program should be brought out to the young people, in the junior high schools. Actually this should be a joint school-library plan, with the junior high teacher, the junior high librarian, and the young adult librarian working as a team, first in the classroom, in time in the branch library, even in time in Pratt Central. The young person in the slum area would be given considerable flexibility in meeting his school book report requirements. The young adult librarian from Pratt would bring a range of free reading into the classroom, the school and library team would present the material, there would be conferences with each student, books would be checked out as soon as interest was aroused and additional books brought in the next day for young people with special interests. The duty of the school would be matched with the mission of the young adult librarian and aided by the convenience of reading materials immediately at hand.

The project would not stop with the classroom. The next stop in the wider world of books would be the junior high library. Then would come the branch library, particularly in planned summer programs. In all this, the young adult librarian, rather than operating primarily within the branch, would range through the young person's world. This would be an extension of work which these specialists already do in the schools. The far-ranging shepherd will not bring back all the sheep, but he will get more than the custodian who waits for the few who find their way alone. Once again results would have to be checked periodically and realistically so that hope and sentiment do not blur the hard realities of trying to lead people to reading once they have turned away.

The key point is to move into a more concentrated and a more out-reaching, library-oriented, free-reading program for young children and for early teen-agers. This could in the long run be the single most rewarding antipoverty step taken by Baltimore, for it would give the rising generation the means to help themselves, first in school, then in getting and holding a job, then in their lives as citizens and homemakers. Our nation must of course help the slum dweller who is cold and hungry, whether with free milk in the schools or welfare checks in the home, but back of this it has a means of releasing the steady, far-ranging potential of self-help. We must give the culturally disadvantaged child and young person every opportunity to develop and to exercise the skill of reading.

Working with Community Groups

Some individuals will respond to library programs set up specifically for them. But we have repeated evidence that the cultural and psychological gap is great between persons of limited educational background and a learning-oriented institution such as the library. Indeed, the distance between the two is composed of a whole complex of social barriers and attitudes in which the library image is only one detail. The problem is to separate the public library, as seen by the person of limited background, from the circle of institutions of high culture and to identify it as an agency for all the people.

One promising approach is to work with and through established organizations and groups already identified with the slum dweller and accepted by him. These range from the church to the school, from medical centers to recreation groups. Welfare agencies provide a bridge, whether unemployment office, social work agency, or babycare center. Experiments should be tried in contacting what are thought of primarily as social groups, such as fraternal organizations and church clubs. Here again this would not be a new experience or a new policy for Pratt, which has reached out to groups of many kinds (just one recent example is work with a program for chronically ill patients in city hospitals), but this is a call for even more, and a reminder that group contacts once opened must be continued for a considerable time, because results will not come quickly among people seeking to break away from the influences of a lifetime.

Pratt Library should assemble a kit of materials about the Library for community workers who come into direct contact with the slum dweller, from the clergyman to the club president. The kit would be composed of three main parts. The first would be a single sheet directed at the community worker himself, showing how the Library can serve his clients or group members and also giving specific information—branch locations, hours, conditions of use—so that he can answer questions directed to him. The second piece would be a bibliography of recent library acquisitions in his field—the ministry, social work, club organization, community medical work; this second item would differ in the kits depending on the particular groups of workers being approached. The third part would be the bulkiest and most important. There would be multiple copies of the previously suggested leaflet on library use for persons of limited education. Closely related would be copies of a half-dozen reading lists made expressly for the culturally deprived. The leaflets and reading lists would be conveniently available for distribution each time the occasion arose for mentioning the Library. There would be a postcard for checking the particular items needed from time to time to renew the kit.

Once the kit is distributed to key leaders and workers within the inner city, the list of recipients should be kept regularly informed about the Library. The monthly folder of Pratt events should be sent to them. At least once every six months they should get a brief supplementary list of titles acquired in their fields, plus copies of an additional list of material for low-education readers. The opportunity bibliography described on p. 49 would go out when compiled, thus picking up where the few selected reading lists leave off. The point is to keep the packet alive and current, and thus to extend its use over a considerable period.

The Brooklyn Public Library has pioneered a program that goes a step further. In substance this institution has created its own community position, in the form of a "community coordinator" who works out in depressed areas, starting with the Bedford-Stuyvesant district.[22] The field librarian makes contact with a wide range of local groups, talking about the library, leaving descriptive literature, selecting appropriate book lists, preparing exhibits. The emphasis is upon bridging the gap between the slum neighborhood and the branches in the area, particularly for local leaders.

There is also the other side to local group contacts. The activities of these organizations–meetings, projects, classes–may provide motivation which can lead to reading. However, access to relevant material should be immediate, because people not accustomed to using books and libraries are not likely to hold a momentary interest and pursue it the next day or later at a branch some distance away. The Pratt practice of distributing materials right at meetings should be extended, thus turning the relationship around and bringing part of the library out to the people.

Bringing the Library to the People

The culturally deprived family in most cases lives not in the larger community with which middle-class people are familiar, but rather in small neighborhoods a few blocks in extent. Much of life is lived within these limits, despite the rich world just beyond. To get close to these people, and to go beyond the more mobile leaders and to reach the truly disadvantaged group, an educational program must somehow be oriented to these local neighborhoods.

The Community Action Program in Baltimore seeks this orientation. It is built around a series of neighborhood centers, each serving about a half square mile. Most people in the action area are within a few blocks of a center. These are modest in physical set-up–often being located in a first-floor apartment in a row house–but serve as information and counseling centers and seek to draw on and direct individuals to facilities anywhere in the inner city or elsewhere in Baltimore.

Pratt Library developed the program previously described and participates directly in the Community Action demonstration project. This starts with the location of selected paperback books for home circulation in the neighborhood centers. Stories are told for children in the centers as well as on the streets. Books are also distributed on the streets from a station wagon, and movies are shown to groups on the street corners. Magazines and nonbook materials are provided because these are reading materials in a form with which many slum dwellers have some acquaintance.

To the extent that the Community Action Program and neighborhood centers become established and spread in Baltimore, Pratt Library should emphasize close work with them. The city program deserves the support of every public agency as one of the primary efforts of Baltimore to meet the problem of its poor people. Also, for the Library, the local centers provide a means to get closer to the disadvantaged, which we have seen has been lacking in the Pratt program as branches have become larger.

The city-wide Baltimore plan does not cover all underprivileged areas, but perforce is confined to designated action areas. In the districts beyond, imaginative consideration should be given to bringing the Library closer to the undereducated. Efforts to attract people to Pratt branches and the Central building as they stand are all to the good, and in the long pull library agencies with substantial collections and diversified professional staff are needed for the recruit entering the world of print as well as for the seasoned reader. But the gap must first be closed, and this will not occur simply by holding the door open to existing installations.

The bookmobile–or as current experience shows, the modified station wagon–may offer a means to bring books more intensively down into the blocks where the disadvantaged live. Particularly for younger children whose parents are not likely to take them to the branch at a little distance, a book wagon at the corner may provide an invitation which they will accept. Several converted station wagons, each making a half-dozen stops a day at half-mile intervals (so that no youngster would have more than a quarter-mile to go for his books) would blanket the major portion of Baltimore's inner city. The mobile unit would have to be replenished frequently from a central source. The staffing and operating cost per unit would be at least $20,000 per year, but the $80,000-$100,000 expenditure for four units could be one of the most productive outlays of the antipoverty program. If the device were tried of handing out at summer vacation time a paperback book to every youngster completing the third grade, the mobile wagon would be one place where the book could be returned and exchanged for more. Special programs in branches in the inner city would be mounted from time to time to attract book wagon users to the larger stationary collections.

In the depressed sections beyond the target area of the Community Action Program, consideration should be given to the establishment of "neighborhood reading centers" by the Library itself. They would be set up to serve approximately the same size district as the neighborhood centers for the poverty program, or perhaps a little greater area, and would be located in low-rent facilities on shopping streets. A small collection of children's books plus multiple copies of magazines plus ready-reference material plus titles in the "Opportunity

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[22] *Wilson Library Bulletin,* December, 1963, pp. 349-51.

Library" (see below) would comprise the collection, some considerable part of which would be in paperback form. The library centers would be staffed by trained aides hired from the community. A roving professional librarian would be available one day a week. The nonprofessional attendants would be specially trained to telephone the branch library in the area as soon as a request arose which could not be handled in the small center, with every effort made to direct the inquirer to the branch with assurance that the information or material sought would be waiting there. The reading centers would thus serve as contact points and feeders for the Pratt system. Only a few reading centers should be tried at the outset, to see just what results they achieve and problems they encounter. They might be a temporary measure, which would no longer have a place when the potential readers in the neighborhood are guided to regular branch installations, but it is more likely that if they have any success at all they will be needed for some years, because some disadvantaged readers will be slow to use regular facilities at a greater distance and new recruits will probably turn up each year.

In any case, Pratt should carefully reconsider its policy of moving toward a few large branch libraries for the inner city. There are now two strong fixed points, in the Pennsylvania Avenue Branch to the north and the recently opened Hollins-Payson Branch to the west. Plans should properly go forward for the contemplated new Broadway Branch in the vicinity of the Hopkins hospitals, thus providing a focal point to the east. But beyond this, large and expensive and long-term installations should not be established in the oldest parts of Baltimore until there is more evidence that they are the best way to reach persons of limited background. Rather, existing smaller and older branches should be rededicated to neighborhood service in the tradition of work with foreign neighborhoods in the twenties. Some of these older facilities are not impressive as library structures, but the heart of the matter is an outgoing program more than a prize-winning building.

The current antipoverty effort by various agencies will no doubt result in a wide range of projects, classes, and activities. They may flourish for a time, but then interest both by the participants and by the sponsoring agencies could decline. Provision should be made for the long haul ahead. The neighborhood branch might well become the long-term, ongoing institution, the agency of individual and informal study when the formal group programs have run their course.

In time as the educational level of the population goes up, the pattern of fewer and larger branches for the more specialized readership which has appeared in America may apply to the inner as well as to the outer city, but that will be the time of the Great Society. The job before us is to take steps to move toward that millennium, starting from where we are now. The conviction that must underlie any Pratt poverty program is that it involves people whom the Library has not reached, and that the facilities and methods that have prevailed for other parts of the city will not automatically fit this "other America."

Reading Materials for the Disadvantaged

The first hurdle in the path of any reading program for poor and uneducated families is the sparsity of suitable reading materials. Considerable publicity has been given in the past few years to the "middle-class" nature of much school-related material for children, so that the interest of the slum child is not caught and nourished. Even more serious is the lack of books or pamphlets which combine simplicity of reading level with maturity of content that will hold the attention of the disadvantaged adult.

This lack of suitable materials is a stumbling block, not only in the path of a reading program, but indeed of any type of educational or job-training project for the poor. The view may even be ventured that unless the gap between the uneducated and reading materials can be narrowed, the antipoverty program runs the risk of failure because we simply will not maintain facilities over any period of time for face-to-face instruction of millions of underprivileged people. The reading capacity of people must be raised, and the levels of reading materials brought down to them, or the fine dream will fade in the light of reality. There must be a means of ongoing education for the disadvantaged.

Librarians are society's experts in reading materials. The Pratt staff stands high in this skill. It is proposed as a first step that Pratt take the initiative in identifying and analyzing reading materials for the disadvantaged—not for a Baltimore program alone, but as a professional inventory essential to the national antipoverty effort.[23] The result would be an "Opportunity Library" which would be drawn upon for the specific Pratt program outlined on p. 50 and also made available to other libraries and to other efforts directed at the poor and uneducated.

Pratt has the professional know-how and experience to identify from the vast range of literature that part best suited to both the disadvantaged child and adult. There is ten years of observation at the Pennsylvania Avenue Branch on which to draw, and work now in the Community Action Program. There are the specialized children's and young adult staffs. And Baltimore has in its contacts in the present rehabilitation program of the city a source of nonlibrary experience to bear on questions of interest and attitude of the slum dweller.

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[23] After this was written, word was received of a committee of the American Library Association engaged in a similar project. There is of course no need for duplication — the essential point is that library skill be mobilized to create a bibliographic tool needed in various aspects of the poverty program. A member of the Pratt staff who directs the library portion of the Community Action Program in Baltimore is also a member of the A.L.A. committee, so it should not be difficult to coordinate efforts.

Books should be culled from the range of literature. Children's titles should be analyzed to see if some can actually serve for adults. Libraries have stocked and used pamphlets, but more to fill gaps in the subject book collection than as media for reaching adults of limited reading ability. And beyond books and pamphlets, magazines should be studied. Reprints of magazine articles might well be developed into a rich resource. Suitable films would be incorporated. A first realization, growing from the Deiches findings, must be that the primary resource of the library, hard-cover books, is the last form of reading material reached by the people under consideration. Sections of the Opportunity Bibliography would list young children's books, titles for the middle elementary years, and selections for the young teen-ager, as well as materials for adults on the topics of prime interest to the slum dweller, starting with health, religion, job opportunities, consumer questions, and specific legal rights.

There undoubtedly would still remain gaps in topics for which suitable materials cannot be found. These would be brought to the attention of publishers, who would listen sympathetically if they knew that requests were based on actual need and if they could be assured that suitable material they produced would go into the "Opportunity Library" and thus be brought to the attention of a prospective market. If the publishers do not respond, the project should be extended into experiments in taking key works and rewriting them to reduce reading level and vocabulary range, assuming the permission of copyright holders can be obtained.

Because a definitive bibliography of reading materials for the underprivileged is a necessary first step in most educational programs for this group, not only in Baltimore but anywhere in the country, national funds should be sought to do this spadework.

The publication and sale of the bibliography would pay for the cost of printing and distribution. But the compilation of the list, for use over the country, would require a grant of $25,000. This money would seem appropriately to come from federal funds, because one could hardly justify taking Baltimore money to do a job that the whole country needs.

Even the best of professional judgment would leave some questions unanswered as to suitability and effectiveness of all titles selected for the bibliography. It is therefore suggested that continuing research be planned to get reactions based on actual use of items by disadvantaged readers. The compilation and publication of the bibliography should not be postponed until this research is done. Rather the list should be pushed through as rapidly as possible, but then testing in the field would pick up so that a field-tested revision could be issued a year later. This research might be a project of the University of Maryland and its new library school, and would require a second grant of at least $25,000.

The "Opportunity Library" would be applied in several aspects of an intensified Pratt program for the disadvantaged. It would guide selection of materials for neighborhood centers, whether these are part of the Community Action effort or directly maintained by Pratt. It would similarly be a guide for materials to go on the mobile units moving about the inner city. Branches would have duplicate and multiple copies of titles in the bibliography. The publication of the list would be the occasion for a special publicity effort, to stimulate at least some adults of limited background to turn to the list for their own guidance. And it would be distributed to and used by workers in nonlibrary programs for the underprivileged.

Summary of Pratt Program for the Disadvantaged

It is possible that a half-million dollars spent by Pratt Library on exploratory and demonstration projects for service to the disadvantaged could open up an ongoing program that would take a significant place in the antipoverty effort, both in Baltimore and in other cities. This money should not be diverted from existing services; individuals now using the Library should not be penalized to see if some others will use the agency. Funds should come from antipoverty sources, including the federal level, or from private foundations. Action proposals for funds should be constructed around each of the following methods of "outreach."

Part of the Pratt program proposed for the disadvantaged would apply to all inner-city areas—the "Opportunity Library," the kits for community workers, the publicity program. Other parts—experimental extension methods, field librarians, and group activities for children and young people—would at the outset apply to a few demonstration areas.

It is proposed that two neighborhoods be selected for intensive work, both outside the target area of the existing Community Action project. One should be well within the inner city and should have an average educational level for adults of no more than eight years according to the 1960 census. The second should be a little farther out, so as to get a group farther along the cultural scale; yet this area should not have an average adult educational level much beyond the ninth grade.

The neighborhoods selected should not be very large, not much more than a half-mile in diameter. They would have some degree of identity and unity and be set off physically to a degree. There would preferably not be a branch library directly within these action areas, but there should be such units nearby, close enough that children who respond to the neighborhood projects can get to a branch by themselves when they become more regular readers. Candidates for the two neighborhoods would be a section a short distance northwest of central Baltimore, which would have the Pennsylvania Avenue Branch as its branch a little distance away, and a section a little farther west, which would have either the Walbrook or Hollins-Payson unit as the nearby branch, but would not be immediately adjacent to either of these.

A program is proposed which would start with necessary background steps and then move on to specific activities in the demonstration neighborhoods. A summary of this program is given below, pulling together the several points developed at greater length in the preceding pages.

1. Opportunity Library

As a necessary preliminary, a bibliography comprising an "Opportunity Library" should be compiled for potential readers with limited cultural and educational background. This is needed nationally for the antipoverty program as well as for Baltimore.

2. Special kit and informational material

Also as an early step, there should be designed appropriate folders about library use and specific reading lists for distribution directly to slum dwellers through grocery and drug stores, churches, and fraternal organizations in the demonstration neighborhoods, and for assembling in kits for clergymen, organization officials, and social workers.

3. Continuing publicity

Both early in the game and as a continuing feature, an information campaign should be specifically designed for persons of limited means, if possible with the special cooperation of one or more newspapers, and utilizing new pictorial and cartoon forms to carry the message.

4. Special programs for children and young people

Within the two demonstration neighborhoods there should be developed the three age-level projects previously described:

a. The "four-to-six" story and book activity in each of the two branches

b. The intensive summer activity for the "seven-to-nine" group

c. The early teen-age reading plan with one cooperating junior high school in the demonstration area

5. Experiments in neighborhood extension

An effort to reach out directly into slum sections should be made by means of:

a. In one of the demonstration areas, at least two storefront neighborhood library centers, established and maintained by Pratt Library

b. In the second demonstration area, book wagon stops at intervals of a few blocks

6. Community field librarian

Over and above the specific projects within the demonstration areas, it is proposed that a field worker devote full time to contacts out in the two neighborhoods, working with churches, clubs, and other groups, guiding and directing people to the children's programs, the local reading centers, book wagon stops, and nearby branches.

A two-year program along the above lines would probably cost $500,000–close to $300,000 the first year while basic equipment is obtained and the program gets started, and $200,000 the second year. These sums are over and above specific grants now made for library service in the neighborhood centers of the formal city poverty program.

It would be pie-in-the-sky to expect a mass response to this or any other reading program for the undereducated. But the test is not whether this effort reforms the world but whether it opens the way back from that "other America" for those who have the potential for the journey. If these experimental and demonstration projects have any degree of success, they should be extended in Baltimore and in other cities.

Evidence should be carefully kept along the way so that the degree of response and progress is known realistically. The Deiches data furnish some hope for reaching more slum families, but no one can guarantee the success of specific methods for promoting reading and library use among the poor and uneducated. A questioning attitude should be turned upon the demonstrations during the two-year period.

The time has come for Pratt Library to give greater attention to the underprivileged of Baltimore in order to open opportunity to all. The Community Action Program provides one arm for handling this complex problem, and in this the library effort will be conditioned by the success of the city program as a whole. A second arm with Pratt Library as the direct moving force is also needed, and in time the two will probably come together. The policy lines which should underlie this endeavor have been implied:

1. **A planned, multidimensional program**
2. **Willingness to innovate, to go beyond, or even to reverse traditional library methods**
3. **Financing sufficient to sustain a genuine program, without borrowing from services needed by other segments of the population**
4. **Long-range commitments, for the fight on poverty will not be won in a year or two**
5. **Experimental approach into a field where many answers are not clear, with feedback for revising and expanding the program realistically**

But before policies must come faith. The evidence indicates that reading and use of the record of knowledge *can* open opportunity to underprivileged youngsters and possibly to some underprivileged adults. A small number have responded to Pratt Library as it stands. Others have turned to reading material available outside the Library. It is incumbent upon Pratt to reach out a hand, with the recorded knowledge of mankind in it, so that as many as have the will and capacity to respond can move into the mainstream of American life.

APPENDIX

Research Methods Used

The primary source of information about reading and nonreading in this report was a series of interviews with a sample of Baltimore families.

The sample was selected by the Department of Social Relations of The Johns Hopkins University. Specific houses (and floors, if multiple-family dwellings) on specific streets within census tracts were designated at random, the number in each tract determined by the proportion of persons in that tract to the total Baltimore population. Every effort was made to reach the exact family designated, even if this required as many as four calls. The total number of households interviewed was 1,913, with information obtained covering 6,314 adults and children.

Trained interviewers provided by Sidney Hollander Associates conducted the interviews. The average interview was just over one hour in length. Because it was important to get the exact sample designated, and in some cases no one was at home when the first call was made, some sessions were conducted by telephone. It was found that the telephone worked successfully, once the initial contact was made and the purpose of the interview made clear. In general, people proved interested in talking about their reading and related activities.

The initial interview was usually with the "female head of the household," the wife or mother in most cases. A supplementary form was then used with the husband. Questions were asked of the mother about the reading of children, and this was supplemented by returns from 3,578 questionnaires filled out in twenty-three schools for the Deiches Fund Study No. 1 (Students and the Pratt Library: Challenge and Opportunity).

The purpose of the interview was stated as seeking information "about how people spend their time," and the source of the interview was identified as The Johns Hopkins University rather than the Pratt Library. This was done to get around the bias which many people might express if told that information was sought about their reading and use of the Library. Both reading and library use are activities which people feel they ought to engage in, and this would probably influence their answers if a reading-library purpose was directly identified. A "halo" effect could well attach to an interview identified with Pratt Library, because the institution enjoys considerable prestige in Baltimore. Respondents were first purposely asked about their visiting activities, their recreational preferences, and their radio and television habits before reading was introduced. Persons who do little reading and never use the Library were asked no more direct questions about these than about other activities. Those who are readers and library users were asked questions in depth on these topics, and many no doubt realized before the interviews were over that these were the focus of the inquiry, but by that time many of the items about reading had been covered.

The forty-three-page interview schedule is available from the Enoch Pratt Free Library. Selected questions are set down here to give some idea of the nature and approach of the inquiry. The full schedule went into some detail on the topics indicated by these selected questions.

Information was obtained for individuals and families about educational level, income, religious affiliation, cultural activities, organizational membership, and the like. It was thus possible to identify the "disadvantaged" by income, education, cultural isolation, or any combination of these.

Social contacts and activities

When you and your husband are at home, how often do you just sit and talk for a half-hour or so? What do you usually talk about?

When you get together with friends, what do you usually talk about? When you go out–on weekends or in the evenings–what are some of the places you go to when you don't go visiting?

When you think of the last few Sundays, how much time would you say you spend at home on Sundays?

Recreational activities

Are there any sports you follow closely as a real fan?

What kind of music do you enjoy most?

What do you like about staying at home?

And what don't you like about staying at home?

Watching TV

About how many hours per day do you watch television on a Saturday or a Sunday? On other days?

What kind of program would you miss most, if you could not watch television for a few weeks?

Think of the famous people you have seen on television. Would you like to meet any of them? Who?

Early reading experience

When you were a child, did anyone read to you?

When you were a teen-ager, did you read any books besides those for school?

When you were a teen-ager, did you have any close friend who read a lot?

Did your parents have many books, few books, or no books at home?

Compared to your mother, would you say that you care more for books, or do you care less, or about the same?

Magazine reading (newspapers also covered)

How often do you glance through any magazine?

What kind of magazines do you usually glance through?

Which one of these magazines would you miss most if you were unable to get it for several months?

Which magazines does anyone in your family subscribe to or buy regularly at a newsstand?

If you felt like reading in the evening, would you rather pick up a book or a magazine?

Book reading

Since you were a teen-ager, have you read the Bible . . . looked for information in a cook book . . . a medical book . . . etc.?

About how long ago was it that you read a book?

Considering the books you have read in the past year, what book stands out in your mind?

What kinds of books don't you care for at all?

Finding out about books

Who recommended the last book you read?

With whom do you talk about books most often?

Do you read book reviews? Where?

Sources of books

In the last year, did you borrow any books from other people? Who?

Did you buy any books during the year? Where?

Have you ever given a book to anyone as a present?

General view of public library

What kind of people would you say go to the public library?

Are the people who go to the library mostly people like yourself?

Would it be a great loss to Baltimore if the public library were closed down?

Would it be a great loss to you personally?

Do you think it is proper for the library to have books which you may disapprove of for moral, religious, or political reasons?

Do you think that there are any books in the library that you may disapprove of?

How is the public library supported–where does it get its money?

Use of the library

Have you ever gone yourself to a public library? About when was the last time you went?

Why did you go there?

Was there a time when you used the library more than now?

About how far away from your home are the libraries you go to?

How library is used

When you go to the library, do you browse through it to find the kind of books you want or do you usually look for specific titles on which you decided ahead of time?

Do you usually make a special trip to the library?

How often do you ask any of the librarians for advice?

Have you ever phoned a public library to ask for information?

Difficulties in using the library

Do you ever find it hard to get to the library because–library is not open, too far away, hard to find parking, etc.?

When you get to the library, do you find it difficult to–find what you want, use the card catalog, get a librarian to help you, etc.?

Do you think the library has a great enough variety of books? What kinds missing?

Do you feel that the period for keeping books out is long enough?

Would you say the librarians are very helpful, just doing their job, or uncooperative?